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'Fair Lady' Keren Hadar



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Success for England at last

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Budget-enabling bill passes first reading

By NINA GILBERT

The government enjoyed a much-needed victory last night when the first reading of the economic arrangements bill was passed by a comfortable majority after being defeated by a tie vote the day before.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, now also serving as finance minister, was obviously buoyed by the 46-37 vote, saying he hopes the 1999 state budget and bill pass as easily in their second and third readings.

The result was achieved after Yisrael Ba'aliya agreed earlier in the day to support the bill, and United Torah Judaism said it received assurances on hastening the passage of religious legislation.

However, Netanyahu denied that promises had been made to any factions in order to pass the bill - a host of economic reforms required for implementing the budget.

Other no-shows from the vote a day earlier came and supported the bill, including Likud renegades Dan Meridor and Ze'ev (Benny) Begin.

Yisrael Ba'aliya MK Marina Solodkin supported the bill yesterday after abstaining Monday, while Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein absented himself last night.

Molodet leader Rehavam Ze'evi supported the bill after voting against on Monday.

After the vote, finance committee chairman Avraham Ravitz said the state could expect to have a budget by the second week in January. He said the committee would begin deliberations today.

At the same time, Ravitz said a condition for his faction's support was the passage of the second and third readings of a bill that would block Reform and Conservative Jews from serving on religious councils.

The so-called Golan Heights bill, which would require a 61 MK majority and a referendum to be held before ceding sovereign territory, came up for debate last night. A vote on a first reading is expected on Monday.



Former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak meets the press yesterday at his new Tel Aviv office. He is expected to launch his candidacy for prime minister next week.

Levy, Sharon befog the playing field

ANALYSIS

A thick cloud of obscurity descended on the political arena yesterday, as enigmatic plots thickened and mystery mongering intensified as never before. The politicians seemed to be doing their best not to dispel the fog.

Moreover, many of the politicians had no way of telling where they will find themselves in the coming few days. This in itself unsettled those with a clearer political address, sent others scurrying and added to the sense of the disintegration of familiar old frameworks.

Topping the list of the most recent contributors to confusion is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's first foreign minister, David Levy.

Levy yesterday had nothing but honeyed praise for Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak.

His utterance also came a day after an intensive negotiation session with Labor's back-stage operator, Gideon Eini, and before a tete-a-tete with Barak. The word in Labor is that Levy may be turning in his No. 2 slot on the Likud list for the No. 2 slot on the Labor list.

Levy knows his Geshet faction is a goner and that he is politically homeless. There will be too many stars in the Amnon Lipkin-Shahak firmament, while Barak is in bad need of a dramatic recruitment, perhaps to offset, or preempt, the feared loss of some of his people to Shahak.

Geshet would be a nice ornament for the Labor-led One Israel political bloc. Perhaps this is why no one is yet drawing up Labor's Knesset list.

Barak must first conclude deals with the newcomers who will get reserved slots. Perhaps this is why Levy for the first time refused to announce that he is running for prime minister.

Meanwhile, Levy's successor at the Foreign Ministry, Ariel Sharon, is also stirring the pot.

A day after he announced to the Likud central committee that he does not want to be prime minister, Sharon announced on a TV talk show that, while he continues not to want the office, he does not rule out special circumstances. When pressed to explain, he advised his interviewers to use their judgment.

The last phrase in particular seems to indicate that this was no off-the-cuff slip and that he was hinting

broadly, though no one could guess at what. To underscore the riddle, he repeated it last night.

Sharon generally says nothing that does not have some sort of a meaning, cryptic though it be. This generated speculation that Sharon knows something of which all the pundits are unaware.

Perhaps, it was suggested, he knows that Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Communications Minister Limor Livnat are actually going to leave the Likud. This would indeed be a set of new circumstances, which could make Netanyahu more unlikely than ever to win the elections.

Perhaps Sharon has also been made privy to secret in-house polls which augur ill for the prime minister. Something, it was said yesterday, must have happened to have made him broadcast whatever hint he had in mind.

It could be that Sharon discovered that the Netanyahu ship is far less sound than it appeared at the central committee. Perhaps Sharon is out now to save the ship or toss the captain overboard.

Around Sharon this is rejected out of hand - for now. He will not challenge Netanyahu inside the Likud as Uzi Landau. To do so he has to declare his candidacy by Sunday. He will not do so, sources insist emphatically. What could happen further down the road is part of the mystery enveloping all.

Abetting the uncertainty were Mordechai and Livnat, who have still not indicated which way they will jump. This is convincing some Likud insiders that they will stay home in the end, though meanwhile they can make plenty of capital out of the mystery.

They are also unlikely to make any move before the greatest mystery-monger of them all, Shahak, addresses the nation, presumably in the middle of next week. The expected revelation that he is running for prime minister will stun no one.

The mystery will remain in the sort of arrangement he works out with the other hopeful, Dan Meridor, which could determine how many centrist lists will be fielded, how many centrist prime ministerial candidates will run, how many bandwagons will be available for climbing, and who will jump on them.

Barak, Levy to team up

By MICHAL YUDELMAN

Labor Party leader Ehud Barak and Geshet leader David Levy agreed in principle last night to cooperate in the elections, Israel Radio reported.

Levy will support Barak for prime minister and Labor will give Geshet several slots on its election slate.

The two leaders met for more than an hour late last night and decided to open negotiations on the terms of their alliance. These reportedly include a No. 2 or 3 slot on Labor's list for Levy and faction status for Geshet within Labor, it is reported.

Meanwhile, former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak plans to announce his candidacy for prime minister and present the nucleus of his team next week, after the Knesset sets an election date, he indicated yesterday.

Shahak is to call at noon today on President Ezer Weizman, who has been meeting with various fac-

tion heads in anticipation of the elections.

In hopes of countering Shahak's appeal, Barak set about persuading Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Levy to forge an alliance with him.

Mordechai met with Barak's confidant Giora Eini, who tried to persuade him to join Barak in the elections.

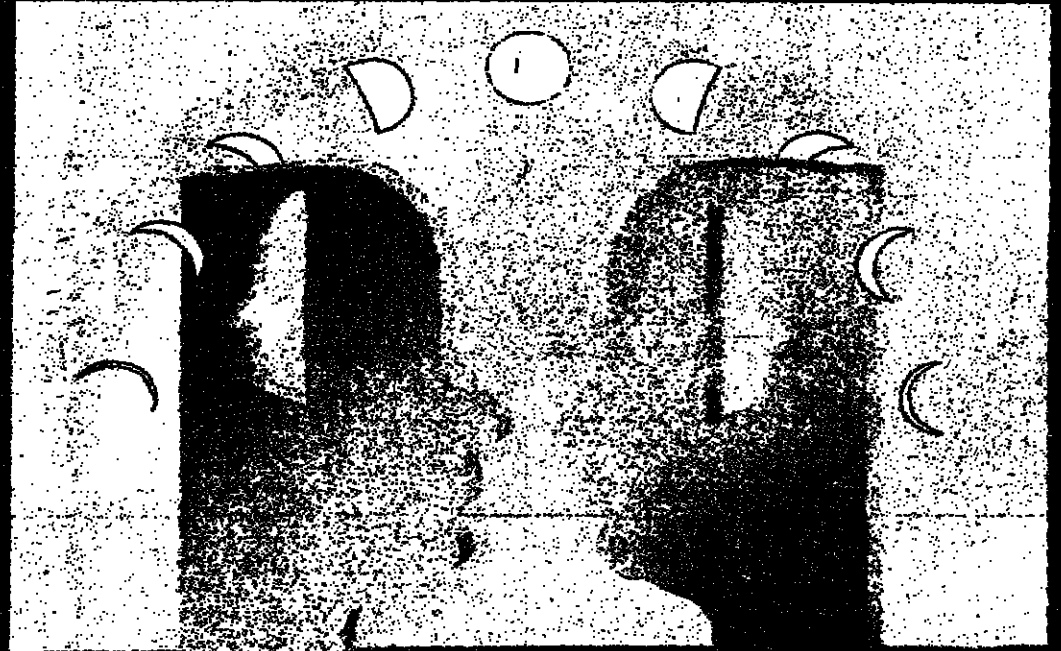
"I think we're at a crossroads," Mordechai said in radio interviews.

"There are changes in the political map. I look with concern and pain at MK Dan Meridor's forming a party and running for prime minister and wish him success. I look at MK [Ze'ev] Benyamin Begin, one of the Likud's cornerstones, who is forming another party, and at other people. Unlike those who dismiss their departure and say it does not indicate any change, I'm not dismissing them," he said.

Elections '99

See BARAK, Page 2

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Gov't to launch gas supply talks with Egypt

By DAVID ZEY HARRIS

Negotiations for the sale to Israel of Egyptian natural gas are to begin next month, sources in both countries confirmed yesterday.

National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon had refused to ask Egypt to sell gas until he had received a formal request from Cairo expressing interest.

Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) chairman Abdel Khalek Ayad last week wrote to him offering to enter talks on a purely commercial basis, Sharon said yesterday.

The Israel Electric Corporation will lead the discussions on behalf of the government, while energy giants Amoco and ENI will join them as the Egyptian gas licensees.

Egyptian sources expressed some concern that Sharon decided to go public, saying they would prefer to conduct negotiations quietly.

Danna Harman adds: "The Egyptian government is free to invite, or not invite, whomever it wants," a spokesman from Sharon's office said yesterday in response to reports that top Egyptian officials have indicated that - until the Wye accord is implemented - Sharon is unwelcome in Cairo.

Full report, Page 12



Barak courted Levy for a year

By MICHAEL YUDELMAN

The first indication that Labor party leader Ehud Barak and Gesher leader David Levy were negotiating an alliance came yesterday when Levy offered some unexpected praise yesterday for Barak during an interview on Israel Radio. Then, in answer to a question, Levy did not rule out cooperating with Barak in the elections.

"I don't rule out people whose only sin is that they belong to another camp. This does not make them enemies of the people," Levy said, alluding to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's criticism of Barak.

Levy described Barak as a man of integrity. "The only politician dictating a new order of priorities today and saying things clearly on social and political issues is none other than Barak," Levy said. "I'm not hating at anything, merely stating a fact," he added.

Asked whether he finds Barak reliable, Levy said, "I have never caught him in a lie."

Barak said "Levy is a very serious man with a significant influence on the developments of the past 15 years and more. He is worthy of finding his place in our movement."

The talks between Barak and Levy have been taking place for some time, sources said yesterday. They also speculated that a Barak-Levy alliance could boost Labor's electoral prospects.

At the same time, people close to Levy looked in vain into the possibility of returning to the Likud with the help of MK Ruby Rivlin, who has tried to mediate between them and Netanyahu.

Barak confidant Giora Eini, who used to mediate between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, met with Levy on Monday to try to persuade him to join the One Israel (Yisrael Ahat) movement being formed by

Barak.

Barak is trying to merge several groups and individuals into this movement, including Meimad and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. Those who join the movement could support Barak without joining Labor. Barak's office yesterday denied the option of reserving Knesset slots for anyone and stressed that Levy has asked nothing of the party leader.

Labor MK Dalia Itzik said Barak and Levy have been maintaining close contact for close to a year. "I would dearly love to see Levy join us, because of the high esteem I have for him and his great public value and courage," Itzik said.

Meanwhile, Barak is making efforts to persuade MK Haim Ramon not to quit Labor for a party which former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak has indicated he is forming. Barak met with Ramon for several hours on Monday and told him Labor would



MK Ehud Barak (Israel Sun)



MK David Levy (Israel Sun)

not fare as well in the elections without him.

Labor Party leaders fear that a departure by Ramon could also hurt their electoral chances by influencing other wavering members, such as Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg and MKs Nissim Zivili and Hagai Merom.

Itzik is confident they will all stick with the party. "Ramon, Burg, and the others will not quit Labor," she said yesterday. "Mark my words. Some of them want to improve their status, others want personal treatment, no more than that. There is no way they'll abandon the party and that's a fact."

PM dodges political questions at Western Wall

By ELLI WOHLGELERINTER

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a visit to the Western Wall yesterday to mark the fast of 10 Tevet and to renew my strength and to draw encouragement from the generations of Jews who prayed that we would be here and we would stay here.

Netanyahu would not answer any political questions, including those regarding the new elections, support from the haredim and right wing, or challenges to his post, choosing instead to focus solely on Jerusalem.

"This is an important date in Jewish history," he told reporters, while dozens of worshippers, tourists, and curious bystanders looked on.

"Twenty-five hundred years ago the siege on Jerusalem began here, and for the last two and a half millennia we have been fighting the same battle, that is to rebuild Jerusalem, to unify Jerusalem, to keep it whole. This is very much the struggle we're engaged in now."

Netanyahu spoke following a guided tour of the tunnel area beneath Wilson's Arch, and after reading Psalms 121 and 122 in front of the Wall.

"He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep," Netanyahu quoted from Psalm 121. "These are eternal words, and they say more about our situation, and in particular our obligation today, than anything else," he added.

Whether Netanyahu was sincere in his visit, or was trying to curry favor with the right wing – a disenchanted segment of the population he needs to win over – was not an issue to some of his supporters in the crowd.

"I think it's best to look at what politicians do, and not worry too much about sincerity other than its

consistency with other things they do," said Howard Weinstein, chairman of the philosophy department at the University of California at Riverside. "You can't look into people's minds, you can only watch what they do – if he does things in two days that violate what he's doing now, then you have reason to question whether this was worth anything, and its sincerity."

The late-morning visit caused much disruption to those who came to pray on the fast day, as security personnel temporarily restricted worshippers from the plaza in front of the wall to secure the area. Not everyone was pleased, or understanding.

"This is ridiculous," said Yair Koenig, an 18-year-old yeshiva student from Woodmere, NY. "Because one man wants to come down and pray, or do his story at the Kotel, or whatever the game may be, I don't think all these people, all the regulars who come down to the Kotel, should be thrown out."

The crowd was allowed to re-enter through metal detectors.

"It took 10 minutes to get through the security check – I don't have a problem with that," said Ken Wechsler, 39, a tourist from Florida. "We lost one prime minister, we don't want to lose another. That's just the way things are here in Israel."

Netanyahu's visit wasn't disruptive just for the worshippers, but of life for the surrounding residents and workers in the Old City. For some, it was a bearable inconvenience.

"It interrupted my life, but I would be more than happy to go through the trouble if we would only have a prime minister who wanted to come here every day," said Yossi Baumol, director of the nationalistic Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva.

Hussein released in 'good health'

WASHINGTON – Jordan's King Hussein was discharged yesterday from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota clinic and pronounced in "good health" after several months of treatment for cancer, a clinic spokesman said.

A Jordanian Embassy spokeswoman in Washington said the 63-year-old monarch had travelled to the US capital where he may meet President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Mayo Clinic spokesperson Jane Jacobs said Hussein was released yesterday morning after undergoing several months of chemotherapy treatments.

"He was in good health," Jacobs said. "He was in good spirits, obviously relieved to be out of the hospital." The king checked into the Mayo Clinic in mid-July, was diagnosed with lymphoma and had six cycles of chemotherapy. (Reuters)



Let's party

Histadrut chairman MK Amir Peretz (center) meets with supporters in Tel Aviv yesterday to drum up support for a workers' party he's thinking of establishing. (Israel Sun)

Arab MKs critical of Tibi plan to run

By LIAT COLLINS and DAVID RUDGE

Arab MKs yesterday rejected Ahmed Tibi's decision to run for the Knesset in a separate Arab party.

MK Azmi Bishara (Hadash-Bilad) called for a joint list of all the Arab parties and factions currently in the Knesset and said they should choose a candidate for prime minister from among them. He stressed the list should include the current factions and parties, which would exclude Tibi, who is also an adviser to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Bishara preferred not to discuss Tibi directly saying, "I'm not objective on this."

Abdul Malik Dahamshe (Democratic Arab Party) said, it would be better that Tibi not go alone. "There is no need to repeat past mistakes. It's best we be on a united list and not split."

The vote of Israeli Arabs in the May elections could play a pivotal role in determining who will be Israel's next prime minister if there are two other candidates, according to Dr. Elie Rekhess, a leading expert on the Arab sector.

He noted that there are around 500,000 eligible voters in the Arab sector of whom 400,000 voted in the 1996 elections.

Rekhess, head of Tel Aviv University's program on Arab politics in Israel, said that a poll last year revealed that 60 per cent would

vote for an Arab candidate against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Labor's candidate MK Ehud Barak. Of the 600 Arab and Druze interviewees surveyed on behalf of the university program, 35% would vote for Barak and 5% for Netanyahu. The survey has a 4 1/2% margin of error.

Last time "when there were only two main candidates for prime minister... The idea was that in the event of the election race going into a second round, the two leading candidates would court the Arab vote, which would strengthen the bargaining power of Arab politicians."

"Since then, however, their position has weakened," said Rekhess, "because of the advent of additional candidates."

Shahak, who is forming a center party, said he is close to a deal with Meridor about who would lead the party and that he would like to see both Communications Minister Limor Livnat and Mordechai join them.

"These are two good people and I will be glad if they're on my list," he said. "Mordechai is an excellent man and Livnat, too, has proven herself, and the public recognizes her achievement." Asked whether adhering to the Oslo Agreement is a condition for joining his party, Shahak said, "Israel needs a final-status agreement with the Palestinians. We need this as a state and a society so we can turn our attention to things which are no less important – ourselves. Therefore I would be glad to go with anyone who shares this opinion."

Shahak criticized the decision to hold the elections in mid-May, noting "this is a very long time, far more than necessary and far too long for the state to be shaken by an election campaign. Too many decisions will not be made when necessary and far too much money will be thrown away."

"I assume I'm among the reasons which influenced the election date," Shahak said, referring to both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Barak's hope that Shahak's popularity will wear out by May.

Batsheva Tsor contributed to this report.

BARAK

Continued from Page 1

But he also suggested he is not making any decisions yet. "I'm a Likudnik, and if I reach a different conclusion I'll let the public know," Mordechai said. "No portfolio is more important to me than the

direction in which we're going and who are the people we can go with. I will take a long hard look at all these things and consider my steps carefully," he told Israel Radio.

Mordechai also revealed on Army Radio that he recently discussed his political future with Barak. Levy, Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, and a number of Likud lead-

With great sorrow we announce the passing of

EVA LOBER ז"ל

wife of the late Lou Lober

on December 29, 1998 (10 Tevet 5759).

The funeral will take place today, Wednesday, December 30, at 10:15 a.m. at the Eretz Hachaim Cemetery near Beit Shemesh. A bus will leave from the Lober residence at Rehov Mapu 4, Jerusalem, at 9:30 a.m. The family in Jerusalem and in the USA

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extend their deepest condolences to
Prof. Jack Habib
on the loss of his father

RALPH HABIB ז"ל

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SOCIAL & PERSONAL

THE WEEKLY MEETING of the English-speaking Rotary Club will take place today at 1:00 p.m. at the YMCA, King David Street. Prof. Clinton Bailey will speak on Life and Laws for the Bedouin. A Happy New Year to all.

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Knesset Law Committee chairman Hanan Porat addresses the panel yesterday as it approved the May 17, 1999 election date. (Isaac Harari)

Law committee endorses May 17 election date

By LIAT COLLINS

After a long debate, the Knesset Law Committee yesterday approved May 17, 1999 as the date for elections, with June 1 as a runoff vote for prime minister, if necessary. The early elections bill is expected to come up for second and third reading next week on what has already been nicknamed Super Monday II.

The committee approved the decision nine to three, with three abstentions.

Many of the MKs complained that the five-month interim period is too long, but Deputy Speaker and Labor MK Shevah Weiss told *The Jerusalem Post* that this is not a record.

"In 1961 the government fell over the Lavon Affair in January, but elections weren't held until August," he said. Weiss nonetheless called for some mechanism which would enable elections to take place faster.

"Every democratic country has the constitutional mechanism for a very speedy process after the political decision to go to elections," Weiss said.

He said Labor agreed to the date only as a compromise. "But from the point of view of a democratic regime and a political culture it was a bad decision."

Committee chairman Hanan Porat (National Religious Party) said, "The Knesset will be able to continue to function properly at least until the Pessah recess, which starts March 17, and MKs must act responsibly and continue to carry out their parliamentary work and be involved in legislation despite their electoral races."

In the last national elections, however, also

in May, Weiss was forced to call the spring recess early because so many MKs were absent from the House because of the primary elections and election buildup.

Porat called the elections "fateful for the country's future, borders, and security." He said the date had been reached through agreement reflecting the considerations of most of the House.

Likud MK Ruby Rivlin said the date was reached because a look at the calendar and holidays showed that election day was not feasible before April 27, except for March 9, which was considered too soon. One of the problems was finding a date which would allow for a possible second round two weeks later.

Rivlin, who is considered close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the premier does not intend filing his early resignation with the president. Such a move would mean elections just for prime minister - but only MKs could be candidates, thus barring former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.

"The prime minister is not even considering preventing Shahak from running; firstly against Ehud Barak, if he wants to, and if he wins to then run in the true race against Prime Minister Netanyahu," Rivlin said.

Although the date had been decided upon by Labor and the Likud in consultation with Shas and Meretz, the committee discussions were nonetheless drawn out and showed splits even within the large parties. This is considered by political observers to reflect the uncertainty MKs feel regarding their futures.

Several Labor MKs said a long interim peri-

od is bad for the country, because it involves waste of large sums of public money, tension, and a freeze in policies.

Ramon accused the Likud of "acting out of narrow party interests, which would be harmful to the country and economy, pulling us into a period of political instability and tension. Elections are necessary in a democracy, but they need to take place as soon as possible. Even that basic lesson, the Likud failed to understand," Ramon said. "You can't speculate with democracy."

Rivlin said Labor could have opted to topple the prime minister in a no-confidence motion, which would have required elections in 60 days, but they chose not to do it and instead hold the elections through the Dissolution of the Knesset Law. There was only a week or two between the two dates Likud and Labor raised, so to start complaining now is hypocritical.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid met with President Ezer Weizman and later told reporters that the May 17 date "is scandalously late."

United Torah Judaism MK Avraham Lazerson, a newcomer in the Knesset, told the committee elections should be held immediately. He raised several religious problems regarding elections the week of Shavuot, saying the date falls on the special day which precedes the three days before Shavuot considered days of preparation for accepting the Torah. He also said he fears that counting the votes will cause desecration of the holiday or of Shabbat and wants voting to take place only on a Tuesday. Eventually Porat uncharacteristically lost his temper and snapped that he had not and would not sanction desecration.

Campaign slogan: 'Barak will return the Golan'

The Golan Residents Committee is considering an election campaign slogan - "Barak will return the Golan" - as part of the fight to retain Israeli sovereignty over the region.

Committee chairman Avi Zeira told *The Jerusalem Post* they had not yet formulated their ideas, but they certainly intend to make the Golan a central issue in the campaign.

"I'm considering the possibility of [a slogan] that Barak will return the Golan; on similar lines [to the previous election campaign slogan] that 'Peres will divide Jerusalem, but we still have to discuss this,' Zeira said. "We certainly want the Golan to be a central issue in the elections. We need to tell the public that they have to take this issue into account when they cast their ballot, and for that reason I think we will be making more noise than we have done recently."

Zeira said recent reports about an abortive coalition deal between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, in which they had allegedly agreed that large tracts of the Golan would be given to Syria in return for a peace accord, had undermined the trust of Golan residents in Netanyahu.

"THIS week coalition chairman Meir Sheerit asked that the law committee prepare for first reading a bill under which people who do not turn out to vote would not get paid for having the day off work. Citizens who vote have the appendix to their identity cards stamped. He said the bill is an improved variation of the suggestion heard after the local elections last month that those who do not vote be fined."

Former leader Rafael Eitan has suggested a bill under which the head of a party running in the elections would have to run as a candidate for prime minister. He said this would make the parties more serious and limit the number of parties running.

"THE law committee yesterday approved for second and third reading a bill, by Labor Party Secretary-General Ra'anan Cohen which would allow the courts to extend beyond the current 14-day period appeals on the election results if there is reasonable doubt that they were fraudulently achieved."

It also furthered a bill by Zvi Weinberg (Yisrael Ba'aliya) that polling slips be translated into Russian and Amharic. Central Elections Committee Director Tamar Edri told the committee it

ELECTIONS NOTEBOOK

By DAVID JUDGE, LIAT COLLINS, HANAN PORAT, MARILYN HENRY and BEN LYFIELD

would be technically difficult to print the names in other languages. Justice Ministry representatives said they would prefer the law not be passed, as it opened questions

of discrimination regarding all other languages. The committee is expected to discuss today bills regarding the cooling-off period for senior public servants and military figures before they can enter politics.

"ALTHOUGH Habad continues to protest against any concession of territory to the Palestinians, its leaders are adamant that they will not become "dragged into" any political activity.

At a rally this week at the main synagogue in Kiryat Motzkin, Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazy, the rabbi of Kfar Habad, said he felt called upon to participate in the rally despite his ill health, because he had recently learned of renewed attempts "to drag Habad into the political turmoil" against the judgement of all the rabbis of Habad, who had announced that Habad was detaching itself from politics.

The determination of the Habad rabbis not to become involved in politics comes as a result of their disenchantment with Netanyahu, for whom they worked untiringly during the last election, and who disappointed them by signing the Wye Memorandum.

"IN New York, the American Jewish Congress yesterday criticized the date chosen to hold the elections. The statement called the decision "sadly unresponsive to the urgent needs of this moment. It is especially troubling that we are told that the peace process must come to a halt during this period - bringing with it a host of negative consequences, including the effect on world opinion in the United States, Arab countries and elsewhere."

PALESTINIAN negotiator Hassan Asfour last night gave a surprisingly muted response when asked whether Ariel Sharon would make a suitable candidate for prime minister.

"Israelis need to decide if they're looking to the past or the future," he said. "They know Sharon, Bibi, Barak and the others, and we hope they will make the right choice."

The remark was in line with the Palestinian Authority's official policy of not intervening in internal Israeli politics as Israel goes to the polls.

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Mordechai: No Lebanon moves now

By DANNA HARMAN
and DAVID RUDGE

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said yesterday that he did not think any "extreme" steps should be taken in southern Lebanon before the elections.

"I would suggest to us all, seeing that there is a date for elections, not to carry out dramatic or extreme actions - in any arena - beforehand," Mordechai said in an Israeli Radio interview. "Both because it is impossible to carry out such actions in a rush and because we don't want it to seem like, in any way, our motives are unclear."

Also yesterday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and several of his cabinet members met with Orna Shimon and Lala Parnas, both of whom have lost sons in Lebanon.

The women have been protesting across the street from Beit Hanassi for the past month, demanding that the problem of Lebanon be addressed with more urgency.

"We asked that a way be found to let the people know that Lebanon is really on the top of the national agenda at all times - and not just during election periods, or when boys are killed," said Parnas after the meeting. "I don't envy the ministers, who have to decide what to do with Lebanon - the problems are very complex."

The South Lebanese Army, meanwhile, has reportedly pulled out of another stronghold in the Jezzine region, north of the security zone, prompting speculation in the Lebanese press about the future of the Israeli-backed force.

Lebanese radio stations said the SLA withdrew from the Annan position near Jezzine following a series of fatal Hizbullah bomb



Bereaved mothers Lala Parnas (right) and Orna Shimon meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Interior Minister Eli Shimon and other ministers yesterday to discuss the situation in Lebanon. (Kevin Unger)

attacks on troops travelling to and from the post.

Hizbullah officials, speaking on the organization's own radio station, were quick to take credit for the move - saying they had forced the SLA into retreat.

The SLA's Voice of the South radio station, broadcasting from the zone, however, said the move was part of a planned redeployment resulting from manpower problems.

It was the second outpost to have been abandoned by the SLA in the Jezzine region in the past few months, following the opening earlier in the year of the Kfar Falus crossing point connecting the Christian enclave with the rest of Lebanon.

Lebanese newspapers carried articles saying that this might be the first step in a move that would end the SLA's control over the Christian enclave and result in the

deployment there, officially, of the Lebanese Army.

The enclave itself is situated north of the security zone but until now has been controlled by troops loyal to SLA commander Gen. Antoine Lahad, despite the symbolic presence of Lebanese Army soldiers in the town and at the Kfar Falus crossing point.

Lebanese security sources, however, were quoted as saying that the main reason for the move appeared

to be the unwillingness of SLA troops to travel to and from the Annan outpost.

Meanwhile, there were unconfirmed reports that the two Hizbullah gunmen recently killed by members of the Golani Brigade's elite Egoz unit near Talousa village, in the central sector of south Lebanon, had been responsible for the bombs that killed five Golani soldiers near the IDF's Tel Kabah position several weeks ago.

PM's Office quiet over Golan compensation

By DANNA HARMAN
and LIAT COLLINS

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office would not comment yesterday on a *Yediot Aharonot* report which said there existed an ongoing secret government project to assess the compensation needs of the Golan residents, in preparation for a possible return of the Golan Heights to Syria.

"It is clear who is leaking this

story," said one official at the prime minister's office. "The Labor Party, which is trying to prove that the prime minister has no principles."

Former finance minister Avraham Shohat, however, speaking on Army radio, confirmed that "some work was done to evaluate the worth of the assets on the Golan Heights," under the previous government. He did not know whether the project had been continued.

The Third Way issued a state-

ment saying the party "takes a serious view of discussions in any kind of forum concerning giving compensation to settlers on the Golan Heights and any other part of the State of Israel. Settlement and security are not bought with money."

"The Golan Heights is an important security and settlement asset to the whole country and therefore no financial discussion has any relevance at all."

High Court asked to remove illegal caravans in W. Bank

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

Meretz MK Dedi Zucker and Peace Now director Mossy Raz yesterday filed a petition in the High Court of Justice against the Defense Ministry, the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, and the Attorney-General's Office demanding the removal of what they termed illegal encampments set up by settlers since the signing of the Wye agreement.

The petitioners also demand the settlers be prosecuted.

The petition refers to 10 sites in Judea and Samaria: nine caravans set up 300 meters east of Bracha; 20 caravans on a hilltop north of Avnei Hefetz; three caravans and a hot-house on Hilltop 7, two kilometers west of Eli; four caravans east of Shilo and Shvut Rachel on Hilltop 759; seven caravans northeast of Alon Shvut; four caravans between Talmonim and Dolev; seven car-

vans east of Ma'aleh Michmash; a caravan one kilometer west of Talmon; a caravan two kilometers south of Ma'aleh Levona; and four caravans two kilometers south of Shilo.

The petitioners claim that in all locations settlers built access roads leading to the hilltops. Some of the encampments were established under the communities' planning schemes and others on state land.

"The issues will be checked in the High Court and we will abide by the court ruling," said civil administration spokesman Lt. Peter Lerner.

In past weeks the civil administration has removed several encampments in the Kedumim area and on a hilltop near Yitzhak. Lerner stressed that just as the administration does not demolish Palestinian structures if they are built under the planning scheme, the same policy applies to structures built by Jewish residents in Judea and Samaria.

For Palestinians, demolitions evoke bitterness, fear

By BEN LYNFIELD

In Kif Harith, a Palestinian village neighboring Ariel, the question on everyone's mind yesterday was when will the Israeli bulldozers strike again.

The voice of Mahmud Abdel-Kader Shakur, whose house was partially demolished on Monday, quivered bitterly as he recounted the turn of events that led the bulldozers from the Trans-Samaria Highway up the dirt road to the extension he built for his children six years ago.

A second house in the village was also demolished, this one in its entirety, and its owners, the Qadoura family, now live in a khaki tent supplied by the Palestinian Authority.

"I have eight children, I needed the extra space for them," said Shakur.

Shakur applied to the Civil Administration for retroactive approval of the addition in 1996, but was rebuffed.

According to Lt. Peter Lerner, spokesman for the Civil Administration, its policy is to refuse building permits to residents of West Bank areas that lack official building plans - even if the person residing in the house owns the land on which it is built. This is the same policy that is applied in Israel, he said.

In effect, this means there is no mechanism enabling Palestinians in such areas to build legally.

Kif Harith, which has 5,000 residents, is located in Area C, which means it is under complete Israeli security control, with the PA exercising some civilian powers, but not planning powers.

In practice, there has been a sharp drop-off in house demolitions in recent months, and Noga Kidman, a staffer at B'tselem - the Israel Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories - said it was too early to tell whether the demolitions portend a reversal of that policy.

According to Lerner, the Civil Administration has given retroactive approval to 3,000 illegally-built Palestinian structures in the West Bank since the 1993 Oslo Agreement, all of them in areas that have building plans.

Another small room in Shakur's house was left intact Monday by the Civil Administration, which, he said, cited humanitarian reasons.

But no one in Kif Harith seemed impressed.

If anything, the arrival of the bulldozers Monday, which touched off a confrontation with soldiers, has brought the worst fears of at least one other family closer to reality.

During the clash, two soldiers were lightly wounded by stone throwers, while seven residents were lightly injured by rubber-coated bullets and tear gas.

"Of course the bulldozers can come again at any time," said Alia Youssef Shakur, sister-in-law and neighbor of Mahmud Shakur.



Mahmud Abdel-Kader Shakur (Ben Lynfield)

She has received a demolition order for the part of her three-room house that she uses as a kitchen, on the grounds it was added illegally. "I'll have to move the gas and everything else into the bedroom, if it's still standing," she said. "We have roofed the entire house together so we will probably lose the entire house."

Nawal Salameh, an agricultural engineer at the Agricultural Relief Committee, a Jerusalem Palestinian non-governmental organization, views Monday's demolitions as part of a larger policy to limit the Arab presence in the area, while expanding the Jewish one.

"If the Israeli population in the settlements outnumbers the Palestinian population, it means the area will belong to them in the final status," she said. "If the house is not licensed, they have a pretext to demolish it. That is why they don't give licenses."

Lerner countered that political factors do not enter into demolition decisions. "As far as we are concerned, each structure is approached on a professional and legal basis to see if it is in violation of planning laws."

Suspected Awadallah accomplice remanded

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

The Beit El Military Court yesterday extended the remand of a 37-year-old US citizen suspected of transferring funds to Adel Awadallah, the former leader of the Hamas military wing Izzadin Kassam who was killed by IDF forces in September.

Jamil Salim Sultan Tsartsur, who lives in Milwaukee, was arrested by the IDF in El Bireh on October 23 during a family visit. The court ordered Tsartsur to remain in custody until the end of his trial.

He is charged with carrying out services for an illegal organization. Military prosecutor Lt. Eli Bar-On said Tsartsur, a well-established businessman in the US, received a note from Awadallah while visiting relatives in El Bireh in September 1996.

The note told him he was considered a fugitive by Israel and the Palestinian Authority and asked him to send funds.

Awadallah had previously met Tsartsur's brother Salah and shared a Ramallah prison cell with him.

Tsartsur agreed to open an account in the US, together with his brother Salah, and send money to fund Awadallah's activities.

Bar-On said that from 1996 until this year, Tsartsur visited El Bireh on a number of occasions, bringing with him bank checks which he cashed and transferred to Awadallah via the aging mother of Hamas leader Sheikh Mohammed Abu Ter, who was detained in prison part of that period.

Bar-On said Tsartsur claims some \$35,000 was given to Awadallah. Bar-On said that when captured, Tsartsur was carrying approximately \$67,500.

Bar-On said new charges will be filed against Ter, who was arrested following Awadallah's death.

If found guilty, Tsartsur can face up to 10 years in prison. Bar-On said, adding that the date of the trial has yet to be set.

Meanwhile, IDF soldiers dispersed scores of Palestinians during clashes at the Tarik Junction in Hebron yesterday morning.

No IDF troops were injured, but Palestinians reported that three Palestinian youths were injured by rubber bullets.

Knesset bans human cloning - for five years

By NINA GILBERT

The Anti-Genetic Intervention Law that will ban attempts to clone human beings was passed unanimously by the Knesset yesterday.

However, the ban is only to be in effect for the next five years, to enable greater study of the possible social, legal, moral and scientific implications of cloning. The law won't affect scientific research on other species.

The legislation is sponsored by MK Haggai Merom (Labor), who noted that since Dolly the sheep was cloned in Scotland the world has been watching closely to see if it could lead to human cloning. "It

has become more and more possible," he said.

"It is a threat to the human race in the same way as the nuclear threat," he said, "since it can bring about an end to the human race."

In a quip befitting the election season, Merom said: "I think that one Benjamin Netanyahu is enough for the country. One Amnon Shahak and one Ehud Barak are also enough." The law defines the types of prohibited genetic intervention as any act aimed at cloning, multiplying or creating a human that is chromosomally identical to another human. It is to be subject to the supervision and recommendations of the Helsinki Committee.

Drug abuse on rise in IDF elite units

AT THE KNESSET

By LIAT COLLINS

There is sexual equality in the IDF in one area nobody can be proud of: drug abuse. The Knesset War on Drugs Committee yesterday heard from IDF officers that equal numbers of male and female soldiers are being caught and tried for using drugs. In the past, more male soldiers were caught.

Former committee chairman Eli Ben-Menahem said there is an increase of drug abuse in elite units. He demanded the IDF take more action and asked that the committee be provided with more details on drug offenses in different units, and particularly whether those serving in Lebanon are using more drugs than those in rear units because of the tension and easier availability.

Committee spokeswoman Naomi Chazan asked for figures on those exempted from service at recruiting centers because of drug use.

The committee accepted the recommendation of Bar Association representative Aryeh Chertok, that while there should be deterrent punishment for drug abuse, first-time offenders in the army should not be given a criminal record which follows them through their adult lives.

(Tsomet). It has the support of the country's environmental groups but is opposed by several drink and bottle manufacturers, who say it will raise the price too much, as well as the Environment Ministry, which is drawing up its own more comprehensive recycling bill.

Regulate hospital volunteers

There are some 100,000 hospital volunteers in the country but no standard regulations concerning their work, the Public Complaints Committee heard yesterday.

Representatives of the Health Ministry and volunteer organizations all agreed on the need for the volunteers to have identity tags.

Committee chairman Rafi Elul (Labor) noted the committee's appreciation of the volunteers and called on the organizations "to formulate together with the Health Ministry clear rules and regulations on volunteering in hospitals and acceptance procedures for volunteers."

Ban dangerous dogs

The Economics Committee is to draw up a list of breeds of "dangerous dogs" whose import to Israel will be limited. The move is in preparation for the passage of two bills concerning owning dangerous dogs. The bills will not affect the security forces. Committee chairman Amnon Rubinstein (Meretz) asked the Health and Agriculture ministries to provide information on the breeds most frequently involved in attacks as well as information from other countries.

Bottle bill passes first reading

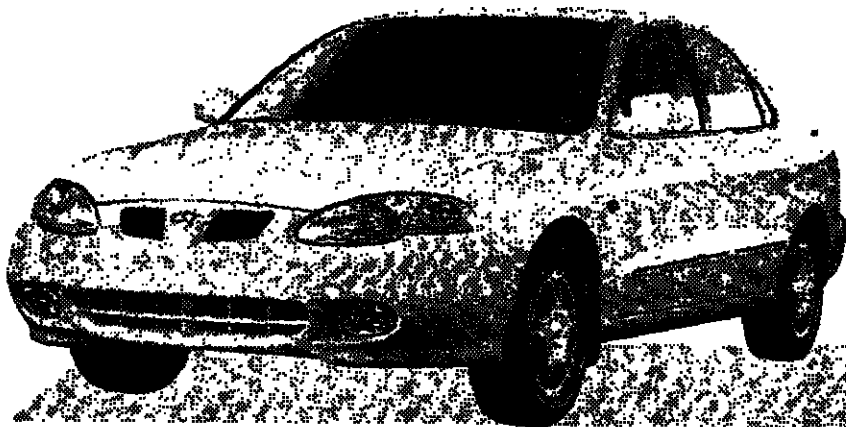
The Knesset this week passed the first reading of the bottle deposit bill, which would place a refundable deposit on recyclable drink bottles. The bill was promoted by the Economic Committee, chaired by Amnon Rubinstein (Meretz), and was initiated by MKs Avraham Poraz (Shinui), Dedi Zucker (Meretz), Marina Solodkin (Yisrael Ba'aliya), and Eliezer Zandberg

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MKs demand Y2K bug boss

By JUDY SIEGEL

With the clock ticking towards January 1, 2000, the Knesset Science and Technology Committee yesterday demanded the appointment of a single minister who would be responsible for ensuring the entire government is ready to handle the Y2K bug.

Committee chairman MK Michael Nudelman called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to name a cabinet member who would have the authority to set policy in the field and instruct all the ministries to take action.

The committee also recommended that a supervisory apparatus for government deci-

sions on the 2000 bug be set up in the Prime Minister's Office, and that it increase coordination among the ministries through a special forum.

A vocal dispute arose at the session among Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office MK Michael Eitan, Prime Minister's Office Director-General Moshe Leon and MK Alex Lubotzky, chairman of the Science Committee's subcommittee on the Y2K bug.

Lubotzky said that the need to update computer programs to handle four digits representing the new millennium is a world problem and a "concrete threat that produces an emergency known in advance."

He continued that he had begun to find

himself "in the absurd position of being asked to direct the government's preparedness efforts while being on the edge of violating the separation between the legislative and executive branches. But I will not give up the fight until the government takes responsibility for implementing preparations."

Leon claimed that only two ministries have so far failed to report on their preparations for the 2000 bug, even though all were to have done so in September. He added that the Prime Minister's Office has hired an outside expert to examine the ministries' reports on the subject.

Meanwhile, Eitan said that a centralized coordinating body is not desirable, and that

in the US, such a body was established only to exchange information and make sure computer systems are compatible. A special cabinet meeting will be scheduled, and the premier will discuss the ministry reports and make his comments, Eitan added.

The cost of preparing for the problems arising from the millennium bug will cost local banks some \$100 million, Israel Discount Bank executive vice president Menahem Gutterman said Monday. Analysts said, however, that the banks will need to spend much more on solving the problem.

Meta Group CEO Jimmy Schwarzkopf said he estimates that the banks will have to spend \$150m-\$200m.

NEWS

in brief

Foreign Ministry investigating new leak

An internal Foreign Ministry investigation is underway after a private letter from Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was leaked to the press - before it was even sent out. In the letter, Sharon complained about Netanyahu's senior advisor Uzi Arad, who, according to Sharon, was scheduling top-level meetings for himself abroad without coordinating with the Foreign Ministry. This is the second investigation to be mounted recently. Last month, Collette Avital, director of the European division, was accused of leaking a secret document to the press and was sent on leave until the investigation is completed. *Danna Harman.*

Health funds to provide uniform service basket

Starting Friday, the basic basket of services provided by the four public health funds will be uniform, following Health Minister Yehoshua Matza's decision this week not to extend the "intermediate period" of the National Health Insurance Law that was extended for a year last January. This means that all the insurers have to supply a minimum basket of services equal to that offered by Kupat Holim Clalit - the largest health fund - in January 1994, plus new medications and treatments added to the basket since the law took effect on January 1, 1995. An element of competition will remain, however, as the health funds can offer higher-quality professionals and service and various extras and supplementary programs; they also can vary their charges for co-payments and visits to medical specialists. *Judy Siegel*

Israel Prize for Hebrew and Jewish languages

Prof. Menahem Banitt and Prof. Zevi Kaddari were yesterday named winners of the Israel Prize in the Study of Hebrew and Jewish languages, the Education Ministry announced. The prize committee cited Banitt, 84, for a major contribution on the glossaries written in French by Jews in the Middle Ages. He has also contributed to an understanding of the teaching methods in houses of study [*batei midrash*] of the Middle Ages. Kaddari, 73, of Bar-Ilan University is a leading researcher on Hebrew language, post-biblical Hebrew composition and semantics. He was also cited for his contribution to modern Hebrew as vice-president of the Hebrew Language Academy. *Jerusalem Post Staff*

Car exhaust pollution kills 300 a year in Tel Aviv

The Environment Ministry has registered more than 600 violations of permitted air pollution levels in Tel Aviv this year, and the main source has been motor vehicles. The figure was presented to Mayor Ron Huldai in a meeting with ministry Director-General Nehama Ronen and ministry specialists. The figures indicated that some 300 people a year die in Tel Aviv because of air pollution. It was decided to erect a fifth monitoring station for pollution levels and to establish a senior-level ministry-municipality team to reduce air pollution levels. Among solutions that the team will discuss is closure of the city to traffic on particularly problematic days, as happens in Paris. *Liat Collins*

CIS immigrants: We're here for our children

More than half the immigrants from the CIS say they came here for the sake of their children's future, a poll of the newcomers taken by the Jewish Agency and released yesterday reveals. Despite reports of growing antisemitism and economic woes in the CIS, 52% of respondents cited this as their main reason for coming. However, the poll was taken between February and August 1998, before either problem had become as serious as it is currently. A total of 1,783 questionnaires were collected, representing 4,090 of the 22,441 immigrants flown here during this period. It has a margin of error of 3%. *Artyeh Dean Cohen*

Dropout rate from school double for Ethiopians

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Despite some progress in recent years, serious problems still face Ethiopian immigrant youngsters seeking to integrate in the Israeli school system. This includes a dropout rate of 6.2% - double the 3.5% rate in the general population, according to a new study by the JDC-Brookdale Institute.

Among those who came prior to 1991, the rate is 10.4%, and it is 9% among boys overall. "Hidden" dropouts are also a problem, with 14% of the pupils reported absent at least one full day a week, for reasons other than illness or vacation.

Not all is bleak, however: 66% of high school youth are integrated into full matriculation programs, and the proportion of Ethiopian immigrant high school graduates and are eligible for matriculation certificates has risen to about 20%, compared to about 7% in the early 1980s.

Moreover, the study shows, a considerable number of Ethiopian youths receive grades of 80 or higher, including 35% of them in Hebrew and 27% in math. There has been improvement in social integration as well, with 84% reporting they spend time with non-immigrant youths during recess.

On the down side, however, 19% fail Hebrew and 32% fail math. About a third of these pupils receive no personal academic assistance during or after school, a factor that was found to greatly improve grades among the more successful pupils.

There are 10,500 Ethiopian immigrant youths aged 12-18 in Israel, with the study focusing on a sample of 850 youths and 360 of their mothers. Their teachers were also questioned in the poll, conducted from April-July 1997, and which had a 1.5% margin of error.

The students come from weak starting points, with 18% from single-parent families, and some 25% living in homes with six or more children under age 18. Almost half have fathers aged 55 or over who often are not working.

Study habits were found to often be problematic, and parents were found to play no significant role in choosing their children's school. Most of the parents reported knowing nothing about what their children do in school, and complained about relations with school staff.

MK Adisu Massala said the improvements noted in the study "are simply natural improvements that would be expected over time. After all, there are children who were born here or who came at an early age, who don't need much support. But the Education Ministry has not managed to help the group that needs special assistance, and that's the reason for the dropouts as well."

The study was initiated and funded by the Education and Absorption ministries, JDC-Israel, and a grant from Edythe and Martin Grodnick.



Hands across the sea

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon (right) meets with El Salvador Ambassador Rafael Angel Alfaro Pineda yesterday in Jerusalem. El Salvador and Costa Rica are the only two countries that maintain embassies in the capital. (Yitzhak Elharar/Scoop 8)

Polish Jews regain site of Nazi-destroyed synagogue

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - The Jewish congregation in the Polish Baltic port city of Gdansk, once known as Danzig, has regained the site of a synagogue destroyed by the Nazis, while many of its artifacts remain at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Jakub Szadaj, chairman of the 200-strong congregation, said a miniature of the Great Synagogue

would be built on the 2,000 sq.m. site, the Polish news agency reported.

The synagogue was returned under a 1997 agreement between the government and Poland's Jewish congregations for the restitution of synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious communal property.

On the eve of World War II, the Jews of the Free City of Danzig were able to save the community's

treasures, and many of its members, when they voted in December 1938 to disband the Jewish community.

The archives were sent to Jerusalem; the Great Synagogue was dismantled; and the community "sold" the contents of its two active synagogues and its museum to the Joint Distribution Committee, to finance the emigration of its members, according to a published report by Vivian Mann of the New

York museum.

The director of the Jewish Museum, which is affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary, was not immediately available yesterday to comment about the artifacts, including whether the museum would consider returning a portion of them to the Polish community.

On July 26, 1939, 2 tons of artifacts from Danzig arrived in New York.

Rehovot woman undergoes rare lung transplant

By JUDY SIEGEL

A 29-year-old mother of two, suffering from a progressive lung disease, underwent the first transplant in Israel of two lobes of lungs taken from a deceased donor.

Such a double procedure is extremely rare in the world, but it has saved the life of the Rehovot woman.

The transplant was performed at Sheba Hospital at Tel Hashomer by a team headed by Prof. Alon Yellin, head of the hospital's thoracic surgery department.

Yellin said yesterday that the lung lobes began functioning immediately, and she is expected to breathe without a respirator some time today.

The woman, who came on aliya from Ethiopia with her husband a few years ago, suffered from sarcoidosis, a disease of unknown origin marked by small bumps in the tissue around bodily organs, including the lungs.

This can lead to swelling and fibrosis and destruction of the tissue. During the past few months, she has been connected to an oxygen tank "round the clock."

Six weeks ago a suitable lung donor was found, but because of family and religious objections she refused to go to the hospital. But soon she was rushed to Kaplan Hospital in serious condition and needed a respirator. On Sunday, a young man died in Beersheba and his family agreed to donate his lungs, and she was transferred from Kaplan to Sheba.

Although the woman has Type AB blood and the deceased had Type A, and his lungs were twice the size that could fit in her chest, the doctors decided to seek a radical solution.

A lobe was cut from each of the donated lungs and transplanted into the woman in a very complicated operation.

Unlike lobes from a liver taken from a live donor, lung tissue does not regenerate in an adult recipient or donor.

"If a lung of suitable size had been available, I would have transplanted it," Yellin said, "but she was in critical condition, so we had to act quickly. About two years ago, we transplanted a single lobe from a cadaver, but doing two is highly unusual."

Education Ministry to build 420 new classrooms in Arab sector in '99

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Provided there is a 1999 budget, the Education Ministry plans to build some 420 new classrooms this year in the Arab sector as part of implementation of a new five-year plan for closing both physical and educational gaps that have grown over the years.

The plan is in keeping with recommendations made by the Ben-Peretz Committee established to recommend improvements in the Arab sector's school system.

Separate committees are currently preparing recommendations regarding separate plans for the Druse and Beduin sectors.

Education Minister Yitzhak Levy, presenting the ministry's plan to the Knesset Education Committee yesterday, stressed that if the budget is not passed, the construction pro-

gram will not end completely, but will be hampered by the fact that the ministry will only be able to make monthly financial commitments.

He stressed the importance of the five-year plan and the need to close gaps between the Arab and Jewish sectors, but warned such improvements will take time.

"Those schools which aren't hooked up to electricity today weren't hooked up in 1992, either," he said. "If you ask me, we will need a third five-year plan down the road for the Arab sector. If about 50% of the last five-year plan was implemented, even if this one is implemented in full, whoever is education minister five years from now will have to implement another such plan to close the gaps, but within 10 years it can be done if it's handled professionally... You can't close the gaps of 30 years in a year

or five years."

Levy had good news and bad news regarding the implementation of the Ben-Peretz committee's recommendations.

As regards construction of the classrooms, one of the major problem areas cited by the Ben-Peretz Committee, Levy said "this will be completed in full," including construction of kindergartens and replacement of flammable structures, and added that all the necessary budgets for this have been found.

However, regarding pedagogic improvements, including more school psychologists and various programs designed to improve the quality of education available in the Arab sector schools, Levy said that less than 50% of the necessary funding had been obtained due to budgetary limitations.



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40 years of Fidel

There will be freedom for those who speak in our favor, and for those who speak against us and criticize us. There will be freedom for all men."

Women too, no doubt, although the quote from 40 years ago, New Year's Day 1959, predates feminism. Not that it mattered — the speaker was Fidel Castro, and it was all lies.

Mere days later, Castro called for the murder of a bunch of counter-revolutionary ruffians who opposed his rule.

He explained: "When the total number of ruffians who will be shot is calculated, they come to fewer than the number that Batista's forces murdered in a single town."

That was all right then — "we who are about to criticize, salute thee," as a Roman gladiator might have said to his emperor.

Unlike an emperor, Castro took a vote on it. This was democracy in action.

Those who agree with the justice that is being carried out, those who agree that the henchmen should be shot, raise your hands. [Mob cheers and hands soared towards the Havana sky.] "Gentlemen of the diplomatic corps, reporters of the entire continent: The jury of a million Cubans has spoken its verdict."

Where's the beef?

The Western Left has always had a problem with Fidel Castro.

In their eyes he has passed from revolutionary freedom fighter to avuncular grand old man of idealistic socialism.

The bit in the middle — the dictator and murderer he swore never to become — is a bit fuzzy in the pink glow of happy Cuban peasants bringing home the sugar (but not much bacon.) When he visited Spain, no one did an Augusto Pinochet on him and sought to make him account for the murders of his regime.

Castro's "freedom for all" speech was made in the eastern city of Santiago only hours after the truly nasty thug, Fulgencio Batista, took a mid-night flight out of Cuba to the Dominican Republic — giving Cubans the best New Year's present for 1959 that they could have dreamed of.

The legendary Fidel and his warriors had come down from the mountains victorious. They were not communists but nationalists, they carried the banner of the equally legendary hero of independence, Jose Mari.

What red-blooded Cuban would not have cheered? Batista had turned their Christian nation into a whorehouse for wealthy American sleazebags, a poorhouse for the masses, and a chanel house for whoever opposed him. This was freedom indeed.

Citizen killers

Fidel promised multi-party elections — "I am not interested in power, nor do I envisage assuming it at any time" — to

the hundreds of thousands who poured out of towns and countryside to hang on his every word and form human trains and triumphal arches for his progress to Havana.

From the lowliest farm-hand to the more enlightened of Havana's upper classes, Cubans did not want to elect this dashing young hero president — they wanted to elect him God.

Even the Americans, who had shamelessly gobbled the crumbs from Batista's table and allowed their citizens to abuse Cubans with impunity, gave a hesitant welcome to Castro.

Revolutions are funny that way. After the thugs and mafiosi have departed, be they Bourbon, Czarist or Batista, a certain outbreak of vengeance is predictable and understandable. It may be even justifiable, as long as due process and moderation are the rule, for vengeance is a meal best eaten cold.

Before that first month of the glorious revolution was out, many former decent citizens had become accessories to mass torture and murder. There would be no return from their stained ideals or from the justifications they would have concocted for the next 40 years to hide the guilt of their blood-lust.

Kangaroo people's courts sent 200 people to execution by the end of the first month. By the end of the 1960s 5,000 Cubans had been executed by the murderous new dictator who had lied about having no intention of taking power.

He also lied about his "democratic" revolution, baring all in a famous speech where he declared he was, and always had been, a communist.

No cheer

Thus Fidel entered history on the wrong side in the Cold War and brought 40 years of economic ruin on Cuba. So why are the Left, and even centrist liberals, still somewhat soft on Fidel-long after they have consigned such communist thugs as "Ceaurescu," Mao and Brezhnev to the trash cans parked in posterity's back yard?

He probably fits in the category of flawed hero for many, certainly for many Cubans. The evil he overthrew was much more vast than the evil he spawned.

The good he began was well intentioned and inspiring — half a million volunteers spread across the country to educate the legacy of nearly a million illiterates left by Batista.

Although half of Cuba's 6,000 doctors fled after the revolution, Cuba today has 60,000 doctors in a population of 11 million.

Stringy social progress is little comfort for the Cuban exiles and for those who have spent most of Castro's rule behind bars — their lives stolen for ever.

It is doubtful that after he is gone the paltry achievements of 40 gloomy years will merit even one cheer from Cubans for the man who arrived a hero but remained a dictator.

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer

Russia: Buying by barter

As the Russian economy continues to tumble, electric companies are accepting food and other goods in return for power.

By RICHARD C. PADDOCK

SMOLENSK, Russia — Every hour, thousands of shiny cans of beef and pork roll off the assembly line at the Smolnyasov cannery here. For the company, it's better than printing rubles.

In this part of the world, Smolnyasov's cans of meat are as good as cash.

The cannery trades its finished product for cows and pigs to slaughter, aluminum to make the cans, equipment to can the meat, electricity to run the equipment and cardboard boxes to ship the cans. It even pays its taxes in canned beef and pork.

"Canned meat has become like the dollar here," said Smolnyasov Director Vadim Skorbyashchev, holding up one of the cans. "These are our dollars."

With the dismantling of the Soviet command economy, Western advisers and international lenders expected a modern market economy to emerge in Russia.

Instead, a medieval system of barter has grown in its place. Economist Dmitri S. Lvov, an adviser to Prime Minister Yevgeny M. Primakov, estimates that 70 percent of Russia's economy operates through the cashless exchange of goods and services.

"For seven years, we have been brainwashed into believing we were headed for a market economy," said Lvov, director of the Central Institute of Economy and Mathematics in Moscow. "Seven years later, we realize we have ended in a sort of feudal communism where forks and knives are exchanged for oil, and oil is exchanged for tires."

Struggling businesses are compelled to negotiate complex trades that can involve more than half a dozen companies and span thousands of kilometers. Local governments finance their budgets with milk, lumber and vodka that they receive in taxes. Down-and-out commodities brokers who once negotiated major international sales now search the Internet for companies with something to trade.

Workers are paid in products they make or in goods their employers acquire by barter.

BARTER first became widespread in Russia in 1994, when investors, bankers and even factory managers found it more profitable to invest their money in get-rich-quick schemes than in manufacturing or agriculture, diverting cash that could have been invested in production.



Russian economists attribute the rise of barter to state policies that restricted the supply of money. (AP)

The system of cashless transactions has spread to most of the 14 other nations that emerged from the former Soviet Union, which are plagued by the same economic problems facing Russia. Gazprom, the giant Russian energy company, recently agreed to accept \$1.3 billion worth of food and other goods from Ukraine and Belarus as payment for debts outstanding for natural gas.

With their reliance on barter, most Russian companies have weathered the economic crisis triggered in August when the government froze foreign-debt payments and the ruble began falling to about 30 percent of its previous value.

After all, the plunging ruble and the collapse of the banking sector have less significance to businesses that hardly deal in money anyway. "In such conditions, barter is our only outlet," said Mikhail Vyrov, the Smolensk region's economic adviser. "Everybody understands that it's one of the worst evils an economy can be possessed by. Barter corrodes, corrupts and eventually destroys the economy. But the bitter irony of our situation is that right now it is our only means of salvation."

Lvov and other Russian economists attribute the rise of barter to government policies that restricted the supply of money available to industry and agriculture.

Aid from the International Monetary Fund and other major lenders was granted with the idea that Russia would maintain a tight monetary policy.

So-called young reformers brought in by President Boris Yeltsin to build a market economy instead helped create a system of gangster capitalism that transferred much of the country's cash to foreign bank accounts. And

rather than encouraging investment in production, Yeltsin's government attracted money to its own treasury by selling short-term bonds that paid interest rates of up to 200 percent.

"The 'young reformers' have managed to eliminate the line for goods that existed in Soviet times and replace it with a line for money," Lvov said.

Now, with Russia's tight money policy, the fallen ruble has become Russia's second currency, according to government figures. On November 30, Russia's Central Bank reports, there were 191.9 billion rubles in circulation — the equivalent of \$10.7 billion at the official rate. By contrast, there are \$30 billion to \$40 billion worth of US bills in circulation in Russia. Primakov said in a recent speech.

Most of the dollars are the personal savings of individuals who keep them hidden in their apartments, safe from devaluations and bank closures. The prime minister

is trying to lure that money back into the economy.

For most Russians, however, cash is too valuable a commodity to spend on the shoddy goods being produced by the aging industrial machine Russia inherited from the Soviet Union, observed Kirill Vishnepolsky, business editor of the *Kommersant* daily newspaper.

Producers of low-grade goods have little choice but to trade with other companies making products of similar poor quality — and blame their problems on the country's lack of money, he said.

One company that appears to be thriving under the barter system is the Smolnyasov cannery, which has nearly tripled its work force, from 792 to 2,200 employees, in the past five years.

The enterprise has established five pig and cattle farms with a total of 5,000 animals, built up a fleet of 200 vehicles, opened a bakery and begun construction on a block of apartments. It has started processing hides and making shoes from the leather so it will have more goods to exchange with suppliers who raise cattle and pigs. And it has opened 60 retail outlets to sell its canned meat for cash.

To keep the system operating, the company usually pays its suppliers a share of the finished products.

For example, the cannery receives animals from farmers, slaughters them and sends the hides to a tannery in Yaroslavl, about 550 kilometers northeast of Smolensk. The tannery tans the hides, keeping a percentage of the leather in payment. Smolnyasov gets the remaining hides back, finishes processing the leather and uses it to pay the farmers who provided the animals.

Across town, however, barter is not working nearly so well for the Diffuzion machine tool factory, which once supplied high-precision tools to factories across Russia. It declared bankruptcy in the summer of 1997 but still keeps operating rather than laying off its workers.

"The machine-building industry has basically been paralyzed," Diffuzion Director Vladimir Moiseyev said. "We need ball bearings made by a company in Saratov. The factory that manufactures ball bearings is bankrupt. But we are also bankrupt, so we pay for the ball bearings with drills." (Los Angeles Times)

Internal strife escalates in Angola

So long has war dragged on that, for many Angolans, it has become the central feature of life

By LYNN DUKE

Zita Camigui fidgets nervously, her gaze downcast, as she tells what Angola's dirty war has done to girls like her.

Kidnapped by Angola's UNITA rebels and moved from base to base for four months, Zita, 16, and seven other girls, aged 13 to 19, were used by the rebels for cooking, cleaning and rape.

"Some of us were used like women," Zita explains shyly, days

after fighting at a UNITA base gave her group a chance to escape to a refugee camp in the southern town of Luena.

With the upsurge in fighting in recent weeks, press-gangings of civilians is not unique to UNITA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

Mothers fear for their sons as the government army seizes young men for military duty. In Luena, army troops last week went house to house in the dark of night to search for youths and then sent truckloads of them off to battle — no doubt as cannon fodder, a diplomat said.

These practices testify to the desperation of Angola's long war and the failure of diplomacy to solve this seemingly unsolvable conflict that has ebbed and flowed for more than 20 years.

Fighting around key cities in recent months — the heaviest in four years — has shattered the 1994 Lusaka Peace Protocol, set back efforts to stabilize a brutalized

nation and created hundreds of thousands of homeless people in what the UN calls a "rapidly spreading humanitarian crisis."

The escalation began with a government assault earlier this month on the UNITA headquarters of leader Jonas Savimbi. Generalized fighting has broken out since then in other regions.

With government troops controlling the towns and UNITA rebels controlling much of the countryside, it is a war that neither side can win decisively, several analysts said.

THE roots of the war go back to well before Angola's independence from Portuguese colonialism in 1975, when separate liberation armies coalesced around regional and ethnic rivalries.

After independence, the war became a Cold War proxy fight: The US backed UNITA, and the former Soviet Union supported the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, now the rul-

ing MPLA party under President Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

When the Cold War paradigm broke down in the early 1990s, the fight became a raw quest for power.

Today, this nation of 12 million watches helplessly as its vast resources — sorely needed for social upliftment — are plundered ever more deeply by more war.

Oil revenue finances dos Santos's government, diamond revenue aids Savimbi's UNITA, and officials on both sides profit personally from what one analyst here called a "postponed country."

So long has war dragged on that, for many, it has become the central feature of Angolan life, its causes obscured by time.

"I am not able to explain what the war is about because when I was born it was already here," said Rita Anita, born in 1963. Anita and her seven children are fed by the World Food Program, which has stockpiled food in Luena.

Luena — about 800 kms south-east of Luanda, the capital, in sparsely populated Moxico province — is a faded junction for a railroad ruined by war.

It is one of many government-controlled cities braced for a UNITA attack. It is to Luena that tens of thousands of people are streaming from the hinterlands.

It is the same in Huambo, Malange, Kuito, and Uige, a few of the urban centers where more than 400,000 new war refugees have been counted in recent

months, adding to the million-plus already displaced.

All told, more than 20 years of war have forced 10 percent of Angola's people from their homes and left more than 500,000 dead.

THE UN largely blames UNITA for the breakdown of the Lusaka accord.

The accord provided a step-by-step formula for ending the conflict and integrating the warring parties into a unity government. Savimbi appeared to accept it but cooperated only partially, while rearming, remobilizing and retaking one-third of the towns he had ceded to government control.

Several rounds of UN and US sanctions against UNITA have had little effect on Savimbi's military capability.

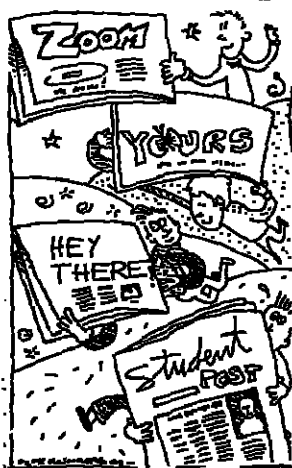
He made his feelings about the protocol clear in a February speech. "The protocol is completely against UNITA," Savimbi said, according to a transcript. "The protocol is destroying UNITA. The international community came to Angola to violate our rights."

Fed up with Savimbi's tactics, the government began massive troop mobilizations nationwide, and even intervened in the war in neighboring Congo to rob UNITA of maneuvering room in border areas.

This month, dos Santos told his party congress that the government would "conquer a definitive peace" by seeking Savimbi's "political and military neutralization." (The Washington Post)

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The Ministry of Health announces that the Website for studying the work paper published by the Committee for the Determination of Responsibility for Injury Caused by Medical Treatment, headed by Dr. Gabriel Kling, will open on December 28, 1998

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Cambodia's Khmer Rouge apologize for reign of terror

PHNOM PENH (Reuters) — Cambodia's Khmer Rouge made its first public apology yesterday for the 1700s "killing fields" reign of terror in which almost two million people died.

Asked at a news conference if he was sorry for the suffering that claimed the lives of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians, former Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan looked straight at the questioner and answered in English: "Yes, sorry, very sorry."

"I would like to say sorry to the people," he continued in Cambodian. "Please forget the past and please be sorry for me. Please brothers and sisters forget the past and join together to develop the country."

He said it was up to the Cambodian people to decide if he should stand trial.

It was the first apology ever issued by a top leader of the Khmer Rouge for the deaths from torture, overwork, starvation and execution during the catastrophic 1975-1979 agrarian revolution.

Nuon Chea, who defected to the government with Khieu Samphan and was "brother No. 2" to the late Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, also apologized to all the victims of the Cambodian war.

"Naturally, we are sorry; not only for the lives of the people, but also for the animals. They all died because we wanted to win the war," he said.

But asked how many people he thought died under Khmer Rouge rule, he said: "Please leave this to history. This is an old story, please leave it to the past."

Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea returned to Phnom Penh yesterday after receiving a "no arrest" pledge from the government.



Former Khmer Rouge leader Nuon Chea is escorted by bodyguards to his room yesterday after having lunch with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in Phnom Penh. (AP)

They came after Prime Minister Hun Sen, who in the past has said they should face an international tribunal, said Monday it was time "to bury the past" and it might not be in Cambodia's best interests to put them on trial.

Hun Sen held talks with the two earlier yesterday.

In news conferences and interviews in the past, Khmer Rouge leaders, including Khieu

Samphan, have always brushed questions about deaths under Khmer Rouge rule contemptuously aside.

Just hours earlier, the 67-year-old Khieu Samphan, his normally gray hair dyed black, had smiled and expressed no remorse in response to questions about the killing fields.

Asked at the news conference who was responsible for the

killing fields, Khieu Samphan said: "This part of history is over now. We consider it an experience in the history of the country."

While the government says the door is still open for a trial, political analysts doubt this will happen.

"It does seem as if they are reassessing the situation," said a diplomat. "If they really wanted to deliver these people to court, they

could — there's nothing really to stop them."

An Asian diplomat said Hun Sen was putting his domestic goal of national reconciliation above calls for a trial.

"But I don't think he's really closed the door one way or the other. If the Khmer Rouge start being troublesome again he can always raise the issue of a trial again," the diplomat said.

WORLD

in brief

Four hostages killed in Yemen rescue

SANAA (Reuters) — Four hostages were killed yesterday when Yemeni security forces stormed a hideout of Islamic militants holding 16 western tourists and freed the remaining hostages, a Yemeni official said. He said the dead were believed to be four Britons. Two other hostages were injured and two kidnappers were also killed. Other hostages — 12 British tourists, two Australians and two Americans in the southern province of Abyan — were released unharmed.

The kidnappers, who seized the westerners Monday, were all arrested, but the official gave no further details of the rescue operation. Yemeni officials said earlier the kidnappers, tribesmen, had demanded the release of a jailed colleague.

China sends returning dissidents to labor camps

BEIJING (AP) — Two US-based Chinese dissidents who sneaked back into China were caught by police and sentenced without trial to three years of forced labor, China's Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

In the first official statement on the whereabouts of Zhang Lin and Wei Quanbao since they slipped into China seven weeks ago, the ministry said police arrested them November 12 in the southern city of Guangzhou in a barber shop operating as a brothel. The ministry said the two confessed to hiring prostitutes and evading border police and both were sentenced to three years of "labor re-education."

Gorbachev wiped out in Russia's financial crisis

MUNICH (AP) — Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev says in an interview published yesterday that he lost his savings — about \$80,000 — in Russia's financial crisis last summer. "All my money is gone," he told *Bunte* magazine.

The financial turmoil in August sent the Moscow bank where he had his account into bankruptcy, he said. Because of the loss, he said he hasn't been able to pay the employees at his personally financed foundation for months. "You know, I'm not really as rich as many in the West think," he said. "The 'new rich' here in Moscow often spend more in one night than I earn in a whole year."

Italian anarchists kidnap Jesus statue

TURIN (AP) — "Free Silvano now or Jesus is dead!" an anonymous note sent to *La Repubblica* newspaper said after anarchists kidnaped Jesus from a nativity scene and demanded that authorities free a jailed comrade.

A photo sent with the letter showed the statue clutching the front pages of two Italian Sunday newspapers in one wooden hand. That's a common practice in ransom demands, showing the victim was still alive and in captivity at the time the photo was taken.

The letter demanded the release of Silvano Pelissero, arrested last spring after an alleged attempt to sabotage a train. Two arrested colleagues committed suicide. The model was replaced yesterday.

Iraq defies US by vowing to fly aircraft in no-fly zone

By LEON BARKHO

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq is challenging the "no-fly" zones patrolled by the US and Britain by flying its warplanes there, Iraq's vice president said yesterday.

"Iraqi planes in effect are flying in a normal manner in Iraqi air space," Taha Yassin Ramadan told Associated Press Television News.

The move came a day after US aircraft fired on an Iraqi anti-aircraft battery in the northern "no-fly" zone. Iraq says the US attack killed four soldiers and wounded seven others.

Ramadan also said Iraq will continue firing at any aircraft that violates its airspace.

"Our resistance will continue against any penetration," he said. "The war is still on."

The US says its planes fired

Monday in self-defense after coming under Iraqi missile attack, while Iraq claims it fired in self-defense after Western warplanes intruded on Iraqi skies.

The US and its Gulf War allies set up the "no-fly" zones in northern and southern Iraq in 1991 and 1992 to protect Kurdish rebels and Shi'ite Muslims from President Saddam Hussein's forces.

Yesterday, however, Ramadan said "the so-called air exclusion zones exist only in the sick imagination of the British and American administrations."

The Iraqi defiance is likely to escalate its confrontation with the US and Britain, which bombed Iraq for four nights between December 16 and December 19.

The air strikes reportedly were aimed at diminishing Iraq's ability to build weapons of mass destruction, which UN weapons inspectors were trying to dismantle until they withdrew December 16, complaining of Iraqi obstruction.

Iraq says 62 soldiers and more than 40 civilians were killed in the strikes. Iraq alleges that many civilian targets were hit, and not just defense sites as the US maintains.

Iraq also claimed Monday that it shot down an "enemy plane," but US officials said all American planes had returned safely.

The claim appeared in banner headlines in all Baghdad newspapers yesterday. "An enemy plane is shot down and search is under way for the wreckage and pilot," the *Babil* newspaper, owned by Saddam's son, Qadai, trumpeted.

But commentaries and editorials made no mention of the four Iraqi soldiers reportedly killed in the US attack.

consultative body on the Cyprus problem. The council did not reach a unanimous verdict, Clerides said in the statement.

"I assume responsibility for this decision and I feel the obligation to underline that the sole factor taken into account with this decision was the good interests of Cyprus and of Hellenism," Clerides said in the statement.

Cyprus ordered the surface-to-air missiles from Russia in early 1997. Turkey, which has occupied the northern third of the island since invading in 1974 after a brief Greek-inspired coup, immediately

threatened military action to prevent the missiles from arriving.

Greece, bound to defend Cyprus under a 1993 pact in the event of renewed hostilities with Turkey, had openly favored the deployment of the missiles on Crete.

Turkey made no immediate response to the Cypriot decision.

Turkish foreign ministry spokesmen declined to comment but said they would give a news conference this morning.

Ankara stations some 30,000 troops in the Turkish section of the island and says the missiles threaten its territory and upset the balance of

power in the eastern Mediterranean. Earlier Turkish statements suggest Ankara would still be concerned by the presence of the missiles on Crete.

Russia hopes Cyprus will respect its contract with Moscow to buy anti-aircraft missiles and sees no danger to regional security coming from it, a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Moscow said yesterday.

"Our position is that this is a purely commercial contract and we expect that it will be fulfilled," Vladimir Rakhmanin told Reuters.

Cyprus backs down on missile deployment

NICOSIA, Dec. 29 (Reuters) — Cyprus said yesterday it would not store on the divided island Russian surface-to-air missiles which Turkey has threatened to destroy, and would negotiate with Russia for their deployment on Crete instead.

"I reached the decision not to install the missiles on Cyprus and I agreed to negotiate with the Russian government on the possibility of installing them on Crete," President Glafcos Clerides said in a statement.

Clerides issued a two-page statement after a three-hour meeting of the National Council, an all-party

consultative body on the Cyprus problem. The council did not reach a unanimous verdict, Clerides said in the statement.

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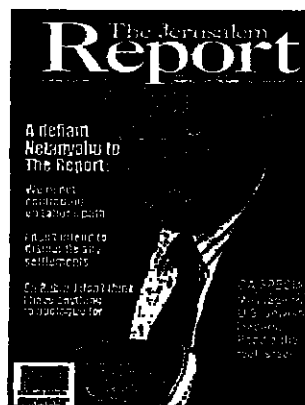
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A proposal to bank on

If the just-released Levin Committee's proposal for a comprehensive rewrite of the Bank of Israel Law is implemented, the world-class reputation and standards of the central bank will finally be supported by the law, rather than solely by the sound judgment of its current governor.

The aspect of the Levin Committee's report that is receiving the most attention is its recommendation to create a monetary committee that would determine interest rates, thereby diffusing the authority that now lies solely in the hands of Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel. The proposed monetary committee is patterned on that of other Western central banks, and would include the governor, deputy governor, and three independent specialists in monetary, fiscal, and macroeconomic policy.

Though some of Frenkel's detractors, such as former finance minister MK Avraham Shohat (Labor), are pretending that this recommendation is a victory against their nemesis, it should not be viewed in personal terms. Frenkel himself welcomes the appointment of such a committee, and is rightly not concerned that it will limit the bank's independence. In fact, the Levin report as a whole is a welcome antidote to Shohat's own fragmentary and irresponsible legislation.

The Shohat bill, which was recently pushed through the Knesset Finance Committee despite the imminent release of the Levin report, envisioned a monetary committee that would include a Finance Ministry representative - a blatant conflict of interest. The Levin Committee, of course, did not take this direction, and stipulates that the three non-bank members of the monetary committee be appointed by the government, as is the governor.

Further, the Levin report addressed a matter more important than the composition of the monetary committee, and one that was completely ignored by the Shohat bill: goals that should guide that committee as they set interest rates. Current law, which has been on the books since 1954, tasks the bank with the stability of the currency, but names other macroeconomic goals - such as promoting economic growth - on an equal footing.

The Levin proposal, by contrast, would bring Israeli law into sync with other developed economies by placing price stability as the paramount goal of the central bank. In addition, the committee proposes that the bank "assist, to the best of its ability, in achieving the other aims of monetary policy, such as growth and employ-

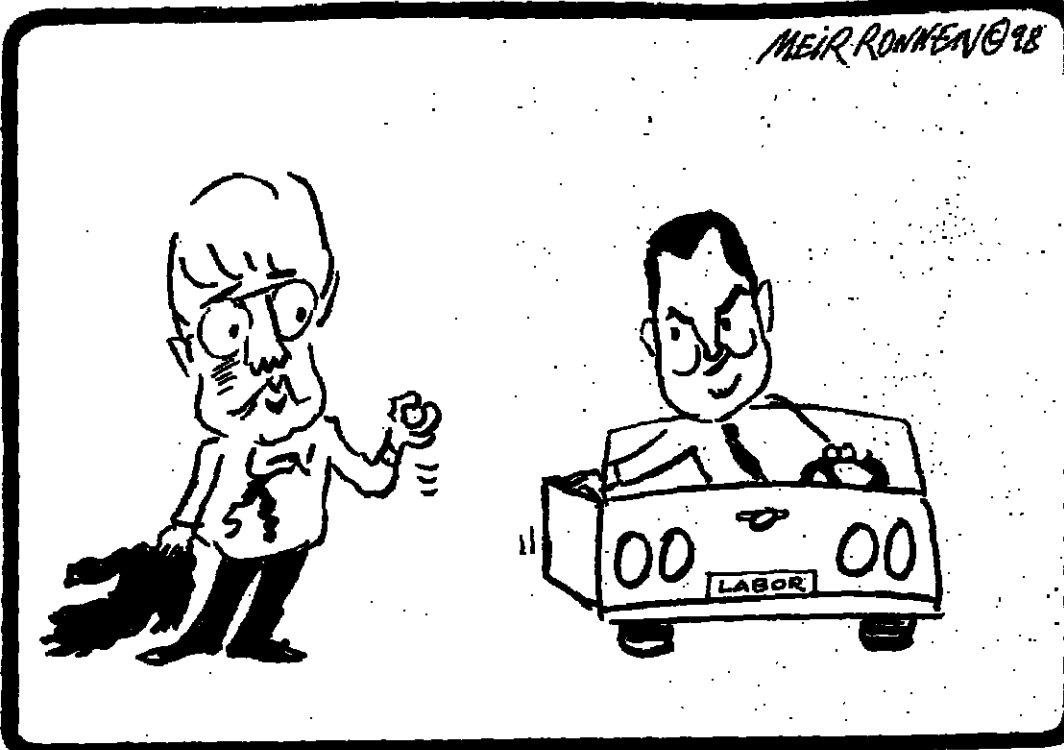
ment, subject to the primary goal of price stability." By sharpening the goal of the bank as the guardian against inflation, the new law would ensure that members of the monetary commission cast their votes on that basis, and not in support of other economic goals. This is as it should be, because the bank can best contribute to the broader goals of spurring growth and reducing unemployment by focusing on the only task it can accomplish directly - keeping inflation in check.

The Levin Committee's proposed new definition of the bank's goals is a significant improvement over existing law, and tracks the central bank requirements outlined in the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Monetary Union. Even if Israel has no current plans to seek membership in the European Union, it is wise not to create obstacles to such a path, particularly when the European standard is worth adopting on its own merits.

Another sensible proposal of the Levin Committee is to remove one of the Bank of Israel governor's current hats, that of economic adviser to the government. The problem with the current situation is the potential of such an advisory role to become a two-way street, thereby undermining the bank's independence. From the government's perspective, it also could be problematic to expect the governor to maintain a laser focus on price stability on one side of the street, while broadening his perspective in briefing the cabinet.

It would be a mistake, however, to strip the governor of his advisory role without simultaneously creating an alternative source of sound economic advice for the government. Currently, no institution has the resources and experience in macroeconomic research that exists at the Bank of Israel. If the bank is officially removed from the role of providing economic advice, a new body should be established for that purpose. Ideally, this new body would draw upon the expertise of the bank's research department, while adding its own.

As welcome as the Levin Committee recommendations are, it would also be a mistake to implement them in legislation before the upcoming elections. The Bank of Israel Law has not been comprehensively revised in the past 44 years, and the Levin Committee recommended that the new law be made a basic law to help ensure its longevity. Such important and long-term legislation should not be subject to the whims of "election economics," but rather should be considered in more lucid times by the next Knesset.



Please don't interfere

I didn't like the way Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed Yasser Arafat in his speech to the Likud central committee, telling him that the Likud would win the elections, even if he tries to camouflage his plans of postponing the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

No better was the pilgrimage made by Labor Party representatives to Gaza and Cairo, in an effort to persuade Arafat to be kind enough to extend the Oslo Accords beyond May 4, to enable the final-status talks to continue until after the Israeli elections.

These two fundamentally mistaken actions involve Arafat, completely unnecessarily, in the Israeli electoral process. In the last election of a prime minister, Arafat called on Israeli Arabs to vote for Peres. It was done by secret message. Now it looks as if the Israeli leaders are legalizing his open involvement in Israeli elections.

The Lebanon War taught Arafat that the bitter disagreement within Israel on a major issue was a golden opportunity for him. Neither approaches by the Labor Party nor threats from the Likud will discourage him from entering into a conflict with the IDF, if he is sure in advance that the Israeli home front is divided.

Such division is liable to inhibit the government's response in preventing the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state on the borders of Israel and Jerusalem. This is what Arafat is relying on, and he may well see the dispute between the two camps in Israel as an opportunity to take such unwelcome unilateral steps.

The Labor Party's excessive courting of Arafat is being seen by the Palestinian leader as recognition of his authority to fix the target date for the final settlement, regardless of the state of the bilateral negotiations. And

MOSHE ZAK

Netanyahu made a mistake by publicly exposing the lack of agreement among the Israeli public on this sensitive issue. By insinuating, he pointed out that his opponents might swallow a unilateral act by Arafat.

While he was conducting secret national-unity talks this summer with Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, Netanyahu knew that such

Israel's major parties should agree not to involve foreign elements in our internal elections

a broad-based government would guarantee unity of purpose against Palestinian unilateral acts.

While these talks were taking place, Washington was careful not to press Jerusalem's hand, even on the question of the date of the IDF withdrawal. The Americans preferred a unity government in Israel, since they were convinced that only such a government could make more concessions to the Palestinians.

The Wye summit was intended to clear the way for a national consensus, even on the question of territorial compromise in Judea and Samaria.

But after the unity talks broke down, President Ezer Weizman's belief that a settlement with the Palestinians required new elections gained ground in Washington, and US Commerce Secretary William Daley blurted out that the only solution was to hold new Knesset elections.

This was undue interference in Israel's internal affairs, and Daley, in fact, apologized after an official

protest by Israel. But it's clear that Israel must now deal with external interference on top of its internal disputes.

TAKE Egypt's initiative this week. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa stated after meeting MK Yossi Beilin that relations between Israel and Egypt in the last two years (i.e., since Netanyahu has been in power) were worse than at any time in the last 20 years.

This was clearly intended to lay the blame for the deterioration of relations with Cairo on this government and to distract attention from the fact that even before Netanyahu business links between Israel and Egypt weren't developing well.

By contrast, Boutros Ghali, the former Egyptian foreign minister, relates in his memoirs how the Labor Party tried to enlist Anwar Sadat's support for Shimon Peres and against Menachem Begin in the 1981 elections. Sadat refused. He wouldn't even agree to a meeting of a Labor Party delegation in the offices of the ruling party, so as not to annoy Begin.

King Hussein also once refused to be a tool in the election campaign of one Israeli party. Mubarak is not following Sadat's policy and relations with Israel are totally different today than they were then. This, incidentally, has no connection to which party is in power in Israel.

Foreign experts are invited by Israeli parties to advise them on election gimmicks. Whether or not it is really necessary is a matter of taste. But this does not justify foreign interference in our internal debates and elections. For the sake of a national unity government which must be formed after the elections, the major parties must agree now not to allow foreign governments to meddle in our internal soul searching.

China's priority

XU WENLI

The aspiration for democracy never ceased to exist in China, even after 1949, when the Chinese communists took power. The Advice and Petition in 1957, the April 5th Movement in 1976 and the Democracy Wall Movement that began in 1978 were all crucial stages.

We, the democracy activists who experienced our formative years during the Democracy Wall movement, can work closely with the younger generation of activists and with the Chinese people to ensure that the democratic torch is passed to the future.

In today's China, after two decades of economic reform, the ruling party has generated some impressive results in the material realm. Except in some remote and poor areas, the living standard of most people has improved.

However, the polarization within society is becoming increasingly evident - there are billionaires living alongside the destitute. There is also growing public resentment against the regime for instituting massive layoffs.

The problems in the economic areas and those in political areas do not occur as separate entities, but influence one another. For instance, the layoff problem in China is not only economic, but political, because it has resulted from the overstaffed working units of the past planning economy. Therefore, political reform must be instituted.

Besides, if the layoff problems cannot be solved, they will have political consequences as well. Thus, even the Chinese Communist Party cannot deny the necessity of political reform.

I think China's political reform should be a gradual process, for in modern Chinese history there have been many radical, revolutionary storms inflicting much pain on people but achieving little in terms of people's democratic rights.

Now, people hope that political

The communists must change their stand on human rights

activism will not revisit those chaotic times by inciting any unnecessary social movements. In fact, the Chinese people do not want to see any disorder; instead they want a stable and gradual reform process.

Democracy activists should, therefore, conform to this demand for development within a stable environment. Actions should not be covert but should be open and in conformance with the Chinese constitution. The tactics of so-called street politics or demonstrations should be minimized or be used with great caution.

THIS is not to say that the demonstrations that took place in Tiananmen Square in 1989 were wrong. The Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement was the greatest people's democracy movement in Chinese history. In this sense, it was necessary and right.

We can see that there are often demonstrations and protests in the Western democratic countries. Truck drivers in France place roadblocks on the highway and conduct strikes right there.

Thus, "street politics" and parliamentarianism are not necessarily in conflict. The form of action depends on the situation.

At this moment, the most important platform for China's democracy movement is the human-rights issue. Under the CCP, China has a terrible record on human rights. Therefore, this issue must be stressed in the overall move to bring democracy to China.

We should fight for the early release of political prisoners. Religious prisoners often are neglected by the people. In fact, this problem is serious. These prisoners were sentenced for "counterrevolutionary offenses" for their ordinary religious activities.

All these political prisoners should be released. The Chinese government should promise not to hand out such sentences in the future.

China is no different from any other country in terms of human rights. All nations are made up of human beings, and China's leadership should follow the same standards in protecting the rights of its citizens.

The writer is a prominent Chinese dissident who last week was given a 13-year sentence for "plotting to overthrow state power" in seeking to establish the China Democracy Party. This article is excerpted from one he wrote for the China Strategic Institute in Washington.

(The Washington Post)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNDERSTAND THEIR FEELINGS

Sir, - I read Jonathan Rosenblum's article "Confessions of a Haredi Dad" (December 11) and the letters relating to it with great interest. Rosenblum seems to have touched a raw nerve among the religious who do serve in the army.

I understand their feelings being that their sons also run the risk of "spiritual destruction." Most of the people writing had personal experience of the army and even positively influenced other soldiers.

This is highly commendable and I think that all Israelis including Haredim are proud of these soldiers. But what about the many boys who don't come out of the army with their values intact?

Eighteen years old is awfully young to have to face the difficult challenges presented by the army. What about the boy in my neighborhood who had his *peyot* (side curls) cut off by his comrades while sleeping? How will he come out of this experience? What about those who do not want to stand out as strange and different and decide to go with the flow?

There are those who come out of the army strongly religious, but unfortunately many who do not. It is on this basis that one must understand the feelings of those parents who are reluctant to send their children to the army.

SANDIE FREISHTAT

Jerusalem.

WAR WEARY

Sir, - "Give the Green Light" (December 24) by Uri Dan and Dennis Eisenberg begins: "Straining at the bit, ready to swing into action, the IAF was poised..." They go on to say Yitzhak Shamir's failure to order air strikes against Iraq infected the military leadership psyche and spread to Yitzhak Rabin and other leaders. I beg to differ with them since they never served in the IAF and have no idea what's really happening.

A few months ago, I finally became too old for reserve duty. I was an air force officer in the 1973 war and was called to active duty in 1991 for Desert Storm, again in 1993 for Operation Accountability and 1996 for Grapes of Wrath.

In Grapes of Wrath, we forced almost half a million Lebanese from their homes and toward Beirut. This allowed our air force to fly 24 hours a day, over all of South Lebanon and attack any targets they wanted to.

But the Hizbullah ignored the air raids and fired over 1500 Katyushas at northern Israel including 40 Katyushas fired into Kiryat Shmona 30 minutes before the cease-fire began. Where were the IAF jets and helicopters during these Katyusha firings?

I am making a constructive criticism and not a negative statement when I say the air force could have done no better or perhaps even worse than the coalition air forces

led by America against Iraq in 1991.

The shell game trick of fake Scuds that Saddam played would have also fooled Israeli pilots from the air. (Remember that last week, one of our pilots couldn't tell the difference between the Osaman's family home in Lebanon and the military target).

Israel could not have put as many aircraft in the air as the coalition did. The distance to Iraq would require more ground maintenance and repair of aircraft after each raid and slower turnaround time for the next raid.

The IDF did not begin with Rabin, but began with Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon's "delusions of grandeur" invasion of Lebanon. It split Israeli society forever, created peace groups for the first time in Israeli history. Killed over 1,200 of our precious and irreplaceable sons in 15 years, inspired the infidels that brought Yasser Arafat to power next door, and continues to erode the effectiveness of our war-weary military.

Yet Dan and Eisenberg have the audacity and hutzpa to try and blame this weariness on Rabin because he can't defend himself.

SHIMON COHEN

Tel Aviv.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

50 years ago: On December 30, 1948, *The Palestine Post* reported that while the IDF continued mopping-up operations in the Negev, the UN Security Council ordered both the Egyptians and Israelis to implement an immediate cease-fire.

The Dominican Republic became the 31st state to recognize Israel.

More than 5,000 Jewish refugees of military age, detained by the British in Cyprus, filed a court order for their release in the Cypriot Supreme Court.

25 years ago: On December 30, 1973, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that Israel was preparing for national elections to the Eighth

Knesset and that the reportedly large undecided vote was the main target of a heated campaign.

Both Israeli and Egyptian military delegations left Geneva for consultations at home after reaching consensus on five out of seven points at issue.

Alexander Zvielli

ברית צולם

צרכי מולטימדיה אינטראקטיבית לארגון חתונות ואירועים



חברת
הדואר
התקנה
הנכסלה

1998-99

Let your fingers do the walking, instead



By Judy Siegel-Itzkovich

Brit Olam (Eternal Covenant) 1998/99, a kit with three CD-ROMs in Hebrew and labels for printing out; requires a Pentium computer and Windows 95 and up; produced by Promedia, distributed in book and computer stores; for adults, NIS 149. Rating: ★★½

In today's digital world, many things can be done "virtually." But I wouldn't recommend choosing a hotel, caterer, musician, photographer and other services for your wedding or other happy event without using them for yourself.

For example, when we went to find a location for our elder son's bar mitzva, we found a popular Jerusalem hall that looked fine.

When we insisted on attending an actual celebration before deciding, we were astounded to discover that the ruckus from a Kurdish wedding held in a gigantic hall on the floor above made it impossible to hear anything in the smaller hall below that we had been considering. And after tasting the food, we realized that the first course of cow's brains would have put most of our Ashkenazi guests off food for a week.

This graphically competent disk presumes to help people plan a festive occasion by viewing videos and still photographs produced by some 100 suppliers of services around the country. Although the disk could also be relevant for organizing a circumcision, bar/bat mitzva, birthday party or any other event, it focuses on weddings.

The program is divided into two main parts: a simple database with an event planner, budget planner, computerized guest list and seating-system organizer, and an odd collection of service suppliers. Most of these are represented only by a name, address and phone number, but some present a video clip, still photos and short written text.

The database section is helpful, but if you have a logical mind and a bit of experience, you could manage the same functions with a pen and notebook. To use this section, you must key in the name of the couple to be married, the date of the event, your available budget, the dollar rate and the number of guests you plan to invite.

Then go into the event planner for a whole list of things to do: choose the location, caterer, photographer, bar services and musicians; buy the bride's and bridegroom's clothes; go to the local rabbinat to register for marriage; decide on an officiating rabbi; prepare and order invitations and mail them; go to a cosmetician or hair salon; order a wedding cake; plan a Shabbat aliya to the Torah; stag parties or hen parties; make an appointment for the bride with the rabbi's wife and to go to the ritual bath; last-minute things to do on the wedding day; opening the presents; honeymoon; registering a new name with the Interior Ministry; and (optional, especially in Israel) sending thank-you notes.

The list, which has spaces for checking tasks you've completed, offers a timetable with recommendations on when each should be completed.

The budget planner has room for listing how much you've paid for each service. One odd entry is "paying the rabbi: not required but an accepted practice."

In fact, Israeli rabbis who per-

form weddings are paid by the religious council out of the wedding-license fee, and it is illegal to give them a tip for their services. Admittedly, though, tips for rabbis still persist, even after a chief rabbi was caught (by a newspaper) accepting them.

The computerized guest list is a grid where you key in the name, address and telephone of all the people you invited, and check off how many you expect will actually attend. Blank sheets of paper with sticky backing can be printed out for affixing to envelopes with invitations or name cards on tables.

Finally, the seating-system organizer lets you decide where to put the guests around a maximum of 100 tables. After entering the number of guests, the program will automatically divide them among the tables.

Aside from the database, the compendium of service providers on the three disks is crassly commercial: Whoever had the most money, to pay, the program's developers took the best, with swinging videos and attractive photos of table settings, dancing and culinary presentations.

However, classified advertisers who paid much less for a listing of name, address and telephone number attract little attention, even though they may offer better services than the others. Before closing the program, the user is warned that "the information is the sole responsibility of the advertiser."

Another severe problem with *Brit Olam* is the relatively small number of businesses listed. A map of Israel showing the north, central, south and Dan regions can be clicked for a single area or the whole country; one can also print out the name of a city and, if you're fortunate, you'll find a hotel, hall or other location to have the wedding, plus producers and designers, on disk No. 1.

But it's spotty: in Jerusalem, for example, there were only four places listed, and three of them were only classified ads without the video, stills and details. There are only 16 advertisers, most of them classified, in the whole southern region from Ashdod to Eilat.

On the second disk, catering, bar services and still and video photographers are listed, while the third comprises music, lighting and "assorted," including a school for dancing, limousines, horse-drawn carriages, fireworks and laser displays.

One advertiser, a Tel Aviv event organizer who apparently paid much more than the others, was allotted his own separate icon to click. Some of the big advertisers offer maps on how to reach the wedding hall and printable coupons worth a small discount.

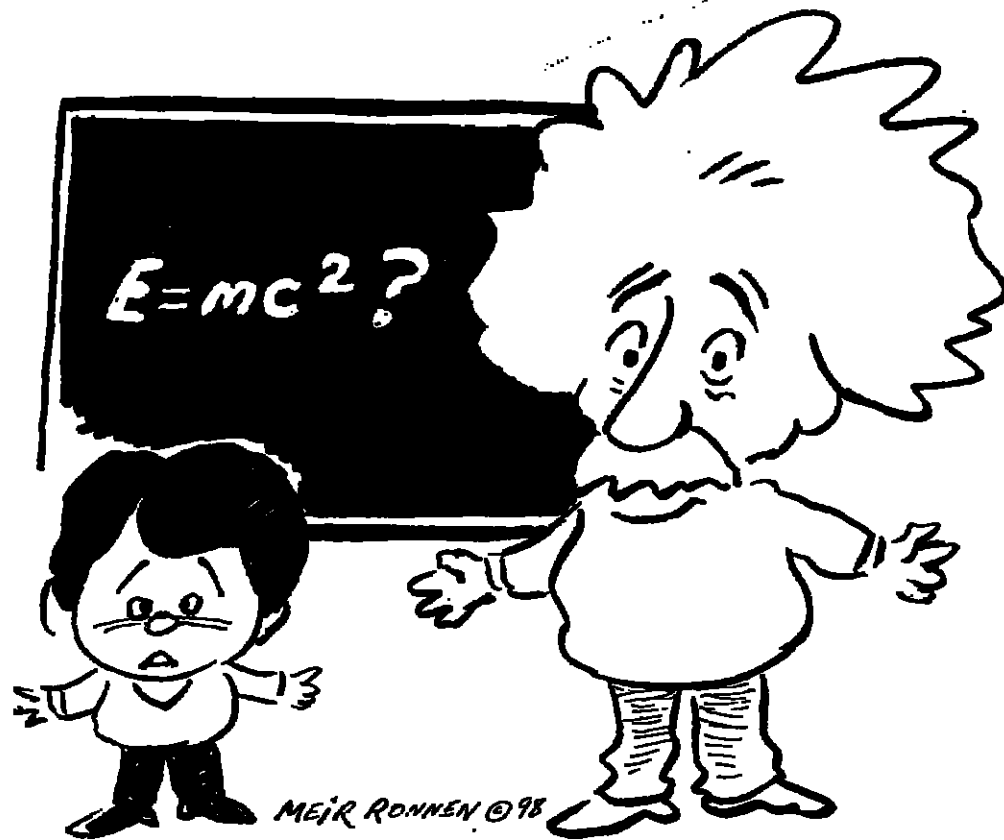
Incredibly, the listings for halls, hotels and caterers don't provide any kosher information: only by going into the details section of the big advertisers can you sometimes determine this. The program is certainly not meant for barehens or even most modern Orthodox Jews; its promotional films taken at weddings show mixed dancing and minimally clad women, and give no information that the observant would naturally demand.

Instead of this kit, Promedia should have offered a much cheaper program on a diskette with the database; that would be useful to anyone who prefers to go through the Yellow Pages rather than using word-of-mouth recommendations to start checking things out personally.

Anyone who wants to be spoon-fed by advertisers would have the option of paying the whole price and seeing their subjective promotions, but I don't know why even they would be willing to fork out NIS 149 to see advertisements.

'Borrow' your child's math skills

What mathematicians love about their subject – and the rest of us loathe – is that it needs deep thinking. Suzanne Sutton tells parents how they can help their children succeed when the going gets tough



Getting off to a quick start

Helping your child get the most out of his or her education is as easy as one, two, three. Topics are everywhere. Look at the class objectives given out during the school year, in your child's notebook or in correspondence from the teacher.

• Ask the teacher what some of the key concepts or units are. Pick one coming later in the year that will be fundamental to subsequent mathematics.

• Create a project that will require digging, research and initiative. Make understanding a

key ingredient.

• Let your child use creative presentations: artwork, models, charts or discourse.

• Make your expectations reasonable but don't accept shoddy work.

• Offer good pay. This is an opportunity for children to learn that laborers of the mind – research, analysis and writing – often pay better than physical labor.

• Hire your child to research and make tables of cost comparisons for several health insurance

plans, mortgage loan options or savings plans; make a set of flash cards with appropriate number facts for a younger relative or friend; make a colorful wall chart of polynomial factoring patterns – a concept all students need, but few master or remember; research, calculate and compare the lowest unit prices for items you frequently buy; explore and explain the relationship between the "inverse" operations: addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, or squaring and square roots.

S.S.

must know it inside and out, and be thoroughly adept at the formal proof of it.

"Once they are expert at a piece of mathematics, they know how to do that with other pieces. Their know-how and their confidence increase. They can do it again," he said.

Most kids approach math the way Sarah did, getting through the assignment or studying just enough to get through the test.

This approach may work in other subjects – but it won't work in math, where everything is all connected. To succeed in math, we have to learn a different approach – one that lets us master the early work before we pile the new work on top.

When Sarah's father spoke to her as a parent, she didn't listen. But when he spoke as her employer, she did.

He hired her to create two posters for his office wall. Using whatever artwork she designed, they were to accurately and concisely convey information on the geometric shapes. He made it clear that accuracy and clear detail were essential, and payment was contingent on meeting the specifications.

Research would be required – at the library, in other texts or on the Internet. What a deal, Sarah was thrilled. And so was her dad.

Sarah spent an afternoon at the library. She asked the librarian for help locating math books and other resources. She spent several after-

noons designing and assembling the posters – cutting, pasting, painting. The resulting posters were polished and precise. She was inordinately pleased with her project, and with her pay.

She is also thoroughly adept at those geometric shapes and their properties. When they come up in class, she is the expert, and she knows it.

AT Back-to-School-Night, Frank's math teacher handed each parent a list of objectives for the 11th grade pre-calculus class.

"Encourage them to keep up," he admonished. "This course gets painfully tough if they get behind. And if they do, they're not likely to make it." Easier said than done,

Frank's mother thought.

The next day, she glanced at the list, with its intimidating jargon and unfamiliar words. She could well imagine the difficulties looming ahead.

"I wish I could help," she told me over the phone, "but the math is way beyond me, and my advice is as welcome as a longer school day."

"Get the list," I told her. "Pick a word, any word. Pick an ugly word, one that strikes fear into your heart." I could hear the panic rising, the barely perceptible gasp. I waited.

"Logarithms," she croaked.

I gave her the plan. She hung up the phone, took a deep breath, and walked into the kitchen.

"Frank, have you studied logarithms yet?" Frank looked at her quizzically and shrugged. "Not that I know of. Why?" "I always wondered what they were. Do you know?" "Not a clue." She told him that she wanted to know, and he looked at her oddly. "No, really," she told him. "I want to hire you to make them clear to me."

The specifications: She'd need to understand them – not just a report to read but a report and discussion that would enable her to understand, from her perspective, what logarithms are and what they're used for.

She didn't remember much math from her high school and college days, so Frank's task was more difficult. He couldn't use jargon she didn't know, or fall back on textbook explanations that presume a certain level of math knowledge. Frank would have to get to the essence of the topic – through his own research, digging and thinking – and learn it well enough to make it simple and understandable to his mother. A difficult task, but the pay was appealing. "Deal," he told her.

First he read about them in his textbook. He didn't understand them at first, so he read it again, more slowly, phrase by phrase. (This is how you read a math textbook.) He tried a few examples to see if they made sense. Sort of.

He searched the index for more information. He went to the library and looked up "logarithms" in the index of other books. (This is how you search for other sources.) Some of these he couldn't understand, but one or two made them easier than his own textbook had done. (This is how you dig for understanding.)

Frank wrote a report on them, but it sounded too much like a textbook, and he remembered the deal: His mother would have to understand them. So he removed the jargon and technical language and explained it more simply. (Now he really understands it.)

He prepared the final version, and presented it, with discussion, to his mother. Now she understands it. And Frank is enjoying the hard-earned cash. And he feels like a million bucks. He's master of a topic that strikes fear and dread in the hearts of millions.

No one handed him the knowledge. He dug for it. And in the process, he beat the bully on the playground.

(The Washington Post)

When eager interest turns into obsession



By Ruth Mason

I have a really hard time tearing my boys, ages six, eight, and 10, away from whatever game they're into at the moment, whether it's Pogs or a computer game. They don't listen when I tell them to stop for dinner, homework, or whatever else they need to attend to. I'm also worried that they are excessively involved in these games. Any suggestions?

Marcia Levine-Shapiro, child psychologist at the Counseling Center for Women in Jerusalem and at the Amirim Center for Psychological and Educational Counseling in Re'ut, says:

Your concern is twofold – first, that your children are not responding to parental commands or requests; second, that they are obsessively involved in their games.

Parents become annoyed when children find a computer game, TV or drawing more riveting than doing their homework or picking up the school bag dropped a centimeter away from the door jamb.

The issue then becomes one of setting and enforcing limits – and you first need to decide that limits are appropriate and necessary. Many parents are ambivalent about

this, wondering if it is really okay to "wrench" children away from activities they are enjoying, particularly if they have doubts about how much they have enjoyed the rest of their day.

Once you have decided limits are necessary, that conviction on your part will ensure real limits.

To get kids to stop their game and move on to something else, you can adopt a compromise solution – breaking the game into negotiable units rather than time periods, which are less meaningful for children.

Instead of saying "You need to stop in 10 minutes," you might say, "When you have obliterated five enemies in Mortal Combat, come and eat lunch."

If it is extremely difficult to achieve compliance, turning off the TV or computer or taking away the game board terminates the activity effectively, if abruptly. I would use this as a last resort.

You can make things easier for yourself, and for your children, by doing some planning together. Prior to the start of the activity, all of you discuss how much of it there's going to be.

FOR THE sake of balance, you might think about scheduling activities by category: indoor/outdoor activities, creative/vegetative, etc.

Keep in mind that you want to strike a balance between activities which are edifying (in your eyes) and entertaining (in the child's eyes). Children are creatures of habit, and it is likely the structure will be in place within a few weeks.

With many children, interest in a game comes in waves. That's okay. But if yours seem to get stuck on one thing over a long period of time, it's time to start looking to



To get children to move on to a new activity, break their game into negotiable units.

see if there is any cause for worry. You sound concerned that there may be something unhealthy about your children focusing exclusively on a particular activity. But it is a positive sign when a child can concentrate on and even become passionate about a particular activity.

Children's play is their "work," and today's play will lead to competence in the real world, where absorption and continuity are important elements of success.

Obsessive attachment should not be confused with the first flush of intensity about a new acquisition. But when might the absorption be worrisome?

Most of us tend intuitively to recognize addictive or obsessive interest. Answering the following questions will tell you whether your

child is exhibiting some of the hallmarks of obsessive involvement:

1. Does it appear in dreams, or preoccupy the child to a degree where he or she is not sufficiently involved in other ongoing activities? Is it causing undesirable behaviors or over-elaborate fantasy based on the activity?

2. Does the child exhibit withdrawal symptoms, that is, a traumatic reaction to being deprived of the activity, even temporarily? Does it occur to the point where even ice cream or bowling, for example, can't compensate for the loss? If so, your child is, consciously or unconsciously, identifying this activity as a need, and it may be helping the child avoid coping with some aspect of reality, or

helping to reduce anxiety.

If this is the case, it is important to identify what is being avoided – school, perhaps, or social interaction with peers or a family member.

If you sense that there is excessive interest, study the game well. Play it with your child. (This is good advice even if you don't sense any obsessive interest.)

First of all, you'll know what is attractive to your child. And he or she may then identify with you – especially if you come to like the game – and learn from you how to abandon it when necessary.

Should this prove unsuccessful, however, and if you feel your child's interest is unhealthy, you may feel it's time to consult a professional.

The tropics in your living room

Corner



By BatSheva Mink

If the orchid is the most exotic flower then the resilient indoor palm is the most exotic evergreen.

For an elegant appearance, there are few foliage plants that can compete with the many forms of palms. The decorative, elegant foliage makes palms suitable for indoor cultivation. Place a palm in your living room and suddenly the whole room takes on a tropical look.

Many palms, however, have to be mature plants before they are seen at their best. It can be 10 years or more before the plants begin to develop their true character. By this time, they have almost become heirlooms and are usually seen in the tropical-house atmosphere of a botanical garden where the necessary time and conditions are present to bring them to maturity.

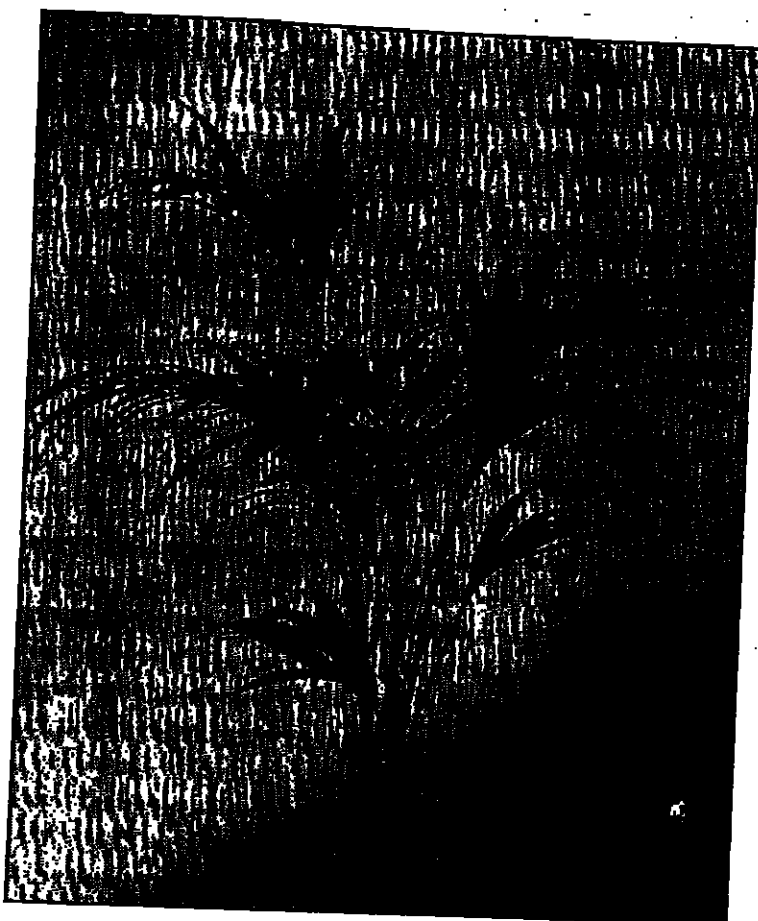
Also the high heating costs in winter and cooling costs in summer need to be considered in rearing the plants. Palms are probably the most expensive houseplants that you are likely to acquire. Therefore, if you have a palm or are thinking of buying one, it would be a good idea to learn how to take care of it.

Although palms are associated with the Pacific Islands, they have not always grown there. A hundred and twenty million years ago, most of the globe had the same climate and palms were more widely distributed.

Then came the cooling that ended with the Ice Ages. The palm retreated before the cold, but a very few were left in the temperate zones and a few in the subtropics.

MOST of the world's 3,500 species of palms (family *Palmae*) need a tropical climate of heat and moisture as a way of life. Therefore, palms find even the subtropical climate of southern California or Florida somewhat chilly.

Only two palms are known to be native to a northern climate, the fan palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) and the European fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*). These are the two hardiest palms and are



Few foliage plants can compete with palms for elegance.

most often seen growing outside in many north European countries.

Most of the palms on the borderline of the temperate zone belong to the group with fan leaves. In the tropics, the feather leaf is much more common. These feather-leaf palms are the ones most prized as houseplants.

More than two-thirds of the world's palm species grow in rain forests. A few hardy species like the date palm live in dry, open habitats, but even these must have access to a permanent underground water source.

The two date-palm trees that are usually found growing in the Mediterranean area are *Phoenix dactylifera* (Heb. *dekel*), native to North Africa, and *Phoenix canariensis*, native to the Canary Islands. These palms have been cultivated for more than 6,000 years.

The date palms cultivated in Israel were introduced mainly from Iraq. A single tree can produce 50 kilograms of dates every year for 100 years or more.

Israel has one native palm, *Hyphaene thebaica* (Heb. *adom*) that grows near Eilat as well as on the continent of Africa.

THE coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) is one of the most beautiful and best-known palms, as

well as a major source of vegetable fat. The coconut will germinate even after floating in water for many months.

It is interesting to note that the popular resort town of Palm Beach in Florida received its name after a shipwrecked cargo of coconuts was washed onto the barren, sandy beach and took root. Early settlers gathered the nuts and planted them to create a palm-shaded area, which was named Palm City in 1880. It was renamed Palm Beach in 1887.

The world's most popular indoor palm originates from Lord Howe Island, a very small island east of Australia.

The Kentia palm, as it is called, has the botanical name of *Howea forsteriana*, because of its source. This is the "Victorian" palm associated with palm courts.

Kentia palms have remained in the forefront of popularity over the years in spite of ever-increasing cost.

Mature plants can grow to three meters in the home. As the Kentia is slow-growing, producing one to three leaves per year, it is usually planted two or three to a pot.

It is extremely tolerant of differing light conditions and will survive with less light than other palms. Palms are unlike other trees as they do not and cannot have any real branches.

They have no annual rings of growth; they grow taller without growing thicker. All their leaves are produced from the top of the stem, and their flowers and fruits are found among their leaves.

All transplant easily even as mature, fruiting plants, in spring or summer. It is not unusual to see fully-grown palm trees being planted outside buildings, as in Jerusalem outside City Hall and the Old City.

A FEW helpful hints for growing palms in the home:

Light: The palm tolerates high-level light and full winter sun but during summer prefers indirect light. If your room is very sunny you may need to diffuse the direct sunlight with a net curtain. The palm survives well in artificial light.

Temperature: Winter temperatures should not be less than 10°. Summer temperatures should not exceed 30°. The palm will tolerate hotter conditions, if the humidity is high and it is not in full sunlight.

Water: Water once or twice a week during summer. During the winter, watering depends on the temperature of your home.

Most losses occur during the winter due to overwatering. Always use water with the chill taken off (lukewarm) and not straight from the tap to water all houseplants during the winter.

Allow the soil to dry out a little between waterings.

Palms, like most plants, need plenty of water during active growth. Generally there is less growth in winter due to low light and low temperature levels.

Humidity: The palm enjoys being sprayed daily with a fine mist of soft water during hot weather. If you live in a hard-water area, boil a kettle of water and let it cool, then use in your mist bottle.

Feeding: During the period of active growth (usually spring to late summer) feed ever other week with liquid seaweed or an all-purpose plant food, following the manufacturer's instructions. Don't feed during the winter.

Soil: Palms need good drainage in their potting mix. A ready-made mix for houseplants that includes volcanic rock (Heb. *toef*) is the most suitable.

Repotting: The best time to repot palms is in the spring, before they start active growth. Larger palms growing in large pots usually do not need to be repotted. Gently remove 4-6 cms of old topsoil with a trowel.

All palms should have a few centimeters of fresh topsoil with two tablespoons of a slow-release

fertilizer added to the top of the pots once a year, preferably in spring or summer.

Cleaning: Palms pick up dust easily with their big leaves. To get as much light as possible directed to your plants, clean the leaves whenever they need it.

Dilute 5-6 drops of milk in a cup of soft water and wipe over the leaves with a soft cloth.

I put my palms outside during a light rain shower at least four times during the rainy season. After 20 minutes, they come back into the house with shiny leaves, looking brand new. Remember

heavy rain together with hail would damage the leaves.

Do not use an aerosol leafshine on your palms.

Pruning: Older leaves that are quite dry should be cut off as close to the trunk as possible. A pruner or a small saw should be used.

Problems: If new, young leaves turn brown it means the plant needs a warmer position. If younger leaves are not as big as the older leaves, the plant is lacking food. If the older leaves are drying up, it is a sign that it is too hot. If the new leaf does not

unfold, it could be there is not enough light or the air is too dry.

Pests and diseases: Examine your plants periodically for mealy bug or scale insects which show up as brown spots. Treat with an insecticide spray on, and under, the leaves and repeat after 14 days.

BatSheva Mink is a curator of the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, Givat Ram. Your gardening questions and comments are welcome. Contact BatSheva Mink, POB 3943, Jerusalem 91039.



Tip of the week

To obtain a fully mature look for your palm without spending the huge sums needed to buy an older palm, plant two or three smaller ones in one pot.

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Large dogs for little people

Heads 'N' Tails



By D'vora Ben Shaul

A reader with children aged two and six writes that she and her husband want to get a dog, but would like some advice before buying.

She asks what breeds are best for a family, and wonders whether a dog poses any danger to children. She voices particular concern about the possibility of dog bites.

Their house is small, she adds, and the family is thinking of a small breed.

Dogs and children generally make a good combination. There's usually a lot of mutual affection.

By and large, it usually works out best if the dog is bigger than the children, since a large dog is usually more tolerant and feels itself less threatened by even the most rambunctious toddler or child.

While statistics seem to show

that large dogs such as German shepherds and chows, rottweilers and Doberman pinschers are the worst biters, these statistics may well be skewed.

If a small dog nips a person, in most cases the bite is so tiny it doesn't even break the skin. And if the dog in question is your own healthy, vaccinated pet, the bite may never be reported and will not be included in the statistics.

On the other hand, a bite from a large dog may require medical treatment and will thereby figure in statistical calculations.

For all that, large dogs are preferable as pets for children. The most common reason for a child getting bitten is the child's having approached the dog's food while the pet was eating. While many dogs will allow an adult owner to take away their food bowl, they seem to consider children their equals and view them as competition.

Dogs need to be taught to allow children to approach their food, but even so it is a good idea to see that children leave the dog alone when it is eating or gnawing... on a favorite bone.

Another reason dogs bite children - and this is especially true of small dogs - is that children often relate to the dog as a doll, trying to dress it or place it in



A child needs to learn that dogs feel pain too. (Israel Sun)

positions that are uncomfortable or threatening, sometimes even painful.

CHILDREN, in particular toddlers and very young children, are sometimes unaware that a dog feels pain just as they do. Large breeds will tolerate a lot more tail- and ear-pulling than will a small or toy breed. It's just a matter of self preservation.

Of course, even among large breeds some are more prone to bite or snap than others. In general, the guard breeds are far quicker to bite than the hunting and herding breeds.

For this reason, Labradors, golden retrievers and collies are usually the safest companions for small children - but even here

there are exceptions. Boxers, though a guard breed, are notably gentle with children.

I consider a boxer a very good choice for the family, while some German shepherds, although of a herding breed, may be less patient.

Rottweilers, some Doberman pinschers and bull terriers are not on the list of highly recommended children's companions; but one must remember that there are exceptions in every breed, as well as different behavior patterns in different children.

Even though I have known snappish poodles and patient bull terriers, overall I don't recommend the dogs included in the previous paragraph as the family pet.



A large dog is more tolerant than a small one. (Warner Bros.)

1501 من الاميل

'Fair Lady' Keren Hadar

By MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

They didn't want her where she wanted to be, and Keren Hadar, 23, wasn't sure about the place that did. It was the Israel Vocal Arts Institute that told her she wasn't just about singing. And she told the Beit Zvi Drama School in Ramat Gan that she'd really rather study opera abroad.

They convinced her to stay, which is just as well. After three intensive years, Hadar got her big break a few weeks ago performing Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* at the Ramat Gan Theater. It was her first major role.

"I'm about to graduate from Beit Zvi in half a year," she says. "and I must admit that these were three very difficult years, but they were lots of fun too. I learned a lot from all the great teachers we have here and even more so from all the students around me."

Hadar, who has emerged as one of the finest local musical theater talents, reveals "that I thought this role was too big for me. I must admit that I was not familiar with the musical, but soon enough I fell in love with it."

"Musicals were far from her mind when she did her IDF service some five years ago. She didn't even consider auditioning for an entertainment troupe, because 'I was an opera fanatic,' she recalls in retrospect. "Light music wasn't anything to consider. So I was just doing regular army stuff in the morning and studying voice in the evenings. Today I would have probably tried to enter an entertainment troupe at least for the

experience, if nothing more."

And what about the future? Will she continue to do musicals or go back into her initial love of opera?

"I believe I'm good at many things - from classical music to Ladino songs to musicals and opera. I am a lyric soprano with a tendency to be dramatic in my presentation."

Beit Zvi director Gary Bilu says "I would love to see a local producer take the chance and put on a production of *Carmen Jones* for her, it suits her perfectly. It's very gratifying to find someone with such vocal talent and realize that you can help her develop it and bring it forward."

And then there is that inevitable comparison to the other unknown Beit Zvi student who starred as Eliza about a decade ago, and from that role went on to superstardom. But Hadar tries to avoid the comparison to Rita.

"Rita is gorgeous, she is magnificent. She is the one and only and there's no one else like her," Hadar says. "It's not fair to compare me to her."

At the moment Hadar is working on her first disc, which she says will feature songs written for her by Nurit Hirsh, Zvika Pik, Kobi Oshrat and maybe Uzi Hitman.

She also awaits the return to the Beit Zvi stage of both *My Fair Lady* - a production no lover of the genre could afford to miss - and *Hair*. She admits that outside the school and her emerging career, "I have no real life."

But she definitely is terrific on stage and if Eliza is anything to go by, Keren Hadar is on the verge of a great future.



Eliza Doolittle (Keren Hadar) takes tea.

Singers of our era hold their own

CLASSIC DISCS

Some people apparently believe that the golden days of singing are long past us. But a look at the recent crop of opera and lieder discs by the leading stars of our time suggests that there is nothing wrong with the level of singing today; quite the contrary.

And although the record industry is having its problems, more than a few recital and concert discs feature young and upcoming stars who have nothing to apologize for.

Take, for example, American mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore, whose new album of unknown Rossini arias is a winner (*Amore per Rossini*, Teldec 0630-13147-2).

Larmore is undoubtedly one of the more lush mezzos of our time: her voice is captivating, caressing and all-encompassing. On this disc she sings eight arias from operas like *Mahilde di Shabran*, *Bianca e Fallero* or *Armida*, and thrills you from beginning to end. In true Rossini style, Larmore dazzles you with her coloraturas and reaches your heart with her natural warmth.

Sumi Jo is one of the finest coloratura sopranos of our time and her newest album, *Les Bijoux* (Erato 3984-23140-2) is a perfect vehicle for showcasing her amazing artistry, with 11 arias from the French repertoire.

Jo is indeed a great technical soprano but here she is warm-hearted and sincere; she can portray a character with ease and charm through her crystal-clear vocal technique. In another album (*La Promessa*, Erato 3984-23300-2), Jo performs 20 Italian songs with pianist Vincenzo Scalerà, that showcase her warmth and round voice more than her vocal fireworks.

One of the most exciting debut albums is that of Eva Urbanova, whose live recorded concert with the Prague Symphony Orchestra of music by Smetana, Dvorak and Janacek is simply stunning (*Eva Urbanova Recital*, Erato 3984-23414-2).

Urbanova has a huge lyric/dramatic soprano which can portray a damsel in total emotional distress (*The Bartered Bride*), a mermaid yearning for human love (*Rusalka*) and a sincere prayer of a socially negated gal (*Jenufa*) with the same ease, charm and both musical and dramatic sincerity. This is a singer who knows how to walk that fine line between the dramatic and the lyric without falling into the trap



Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) stopped writing opera in 1829.

of being overly emotional. Remember her name: Eva Urbanova seems bound for stardom.

One of the hottest lieder singers of our time is countertenor Brian Asawa, whose voice can pierce your heart like a dagger with its immediacy and emotional sincerity.

The Dark is My Delight (BMG 90266-88182) is a jewel full of numerous gems, including five songs by Thomas Campion and 11 by John Dowland.

These could easily have been the pop hit tunes of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The songs are most beguiling yet they are much more than minute ditties. Each has a whole world encompassed within its lyrics and music and Asawa, accompanied by David Taylor on the lute, simply sails through them in a very profound way.

In *Vocalise* (BMG 90266-89032) Asawa delves into more unfamiliar material, a selection of French and Russian rarities topped by three songs of Villa-Lobos, including one of the most touching and evocative renditions of the *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5.

Brian Asawa seems to sing with effortless simplicity and refinement. Listen to these discs and you will immediately discover

one of the most romantic and soothing voices in the repertoire.

THE new album of The King's Singers (*Night Songs*, BMG 90266-68646-2), a compilation of 15 charming songs performed in the ensemble's very special style, is also enjoyable.

These German lieder (Schubert, Brahms, Schumann) are most invigorating when performed by six singers, rather than one. The singing is always clean, the performance very stylistic and the overall feeling is of total joie de vivre in music making.

Last but not least is new tenor sensation Jose Cura, whose disc of Argentinean songs (*Onhele*, Erato 3984-23138-2) is anything but yet another poorly conceived crossover album.

Cura emerges here as a comprehensive musician, who aside from singing, is also responsible for the orchestrations and some conducting and composing, too. But it is above all his creamy tenor, a most welcome guest at the leading opera houses of our time, which captures you from beginning to end.

This rewarding album contains some great Latin American music performed with sincerity, aplomb and vocal panache. Cura emerges as a great singer who pays a graceful tribute to his own musical traditions.

Elton still packs 'em in

By DEAN GOODMAN

More than a generation after he played his first show in North America, Elton John can still draw a crowd.

The English rocker was North America's most popular 1998 concert draw, in terms of ticket sales, with an estimated \$46.2 million, according to data released on Monday by concert industry trade magazine *Pollstar*.

The industry closed the year with \$1.3 billion for all tours, essentially matching 1997, *Pollstar* said.

The record is \$1.4 billion, which was rung up in 1994, when such star attractions as The Rolling Stones, The Eagles, The Grateful Dead and Barbra Streisand were all on the road.

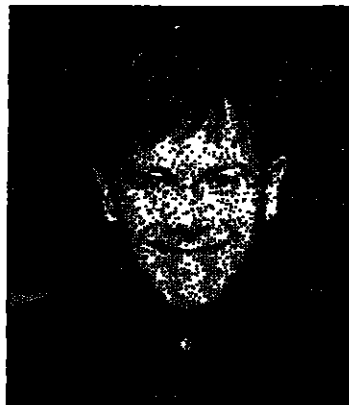
"It (1998) was not a year that promoters cried about, nor did they crow about it either," said Gary Bongiovanni, editor-in-chief of Fresno, California-based *Pollstar*.

Behind John were the Dave Matthews Band, \$40.1 million; Canadian singer Celine Dion, \$38.1 million; New Age artist Yanni, \$37.4 million, and country star Garth Brooks, \$37.2 million.

Brooks, the biggest selling solo artist in US music history, was No. 1 by another measure. He drew the biggest crowds, playing to an average of 67,274 people in each of the 27 cities on his 99-stop arena tour, said *Pollstar*. Brooks charged about \$19 per ticket, by far the lowest among the top 20 touring acts, Bongiovanni said.

"Three years ago, ticket prices of \$50-\$70 stood out like a sore thumb," Bongiovanni said. "In 1998, those prices are not at all surprising."

John, who first played the United States in August 1970 with a showcase at the tiny Troubadour club in West Hollywood, earned his \$46.2 million from 63 shows in 52 cities. He played to an average crowd of 20,000 people per city.



Elton John

The Dave Matthews Band, the Virginia-based combo, played 85 shows in 76 cities.

The Rolling Stones, last year's top act with \$89.3 million, spent most of the year in Europe but still managed to rank 10th in North America with \$31.8 million. Worldwide, the veteran rockers earned \$161.4 million, according to *Pollstar*.

"The Stones are clearly the No. 1 concert act in the world and have been for some time," said Bongiovanni.

He cited the Stones, the Dave Matthews Band and the ninth-ranked George Strait Country Music Festival (\$33 million) as among the year's success stories.

Honors for the busiest act went to modern rock band Third Eye Blind, which played 137 shows in 136 cities and grossed \$7.8 million, Bongiovanni said.

He declined to elaborate on this year's losers, but *Pollstar* figures painted a grim picture for the Kiss (\$14.1 million), Van Halen (\$8.8 million) and H.O.R.D.E. Festival (\$7.6 million) tours, none of which made the top 20. Kiss actually led the field in 1996 when its reunion tour grossed \$43.6 million.

Bongiovanni was bullish about prospects for 1999 when the Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band and Madonna are all scheduled to hit the road. (Reuters)

NEWS

of the muse

By MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

Ben-Dor records neglected masterpieces

Maestra Giselle Ben-Dor, the Uruguayan-born Israeli conductor who is the music director of the Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra, has recently signed a recording contract with BMG/Conifer. Her first disc for the label was the world-premiere recording of the complete score to the ballet *Estancia* by Alberto Ginastera, coupled with the same composer's other ballet, *Panambi*.

Another recent disc by Ben-Dor, this time for the Koch label, features the world-premiere recording of the original version of the ballet *La Coronela* by Silvestre Revueltas in tandem with the same composer's *Itinerarios* and *Colorines*.

Sinfonietta announces new music adviser

Estonian conductor Eri Klass has been appointed music adviser of the Israel Sinfonietta Beersheba beginning next season. Klass lives and works in Estonia, and will give the orchestra about four weeks a year. He will replace the current music director, Uri Mayer, who will bid the orchestra farewell after conducting several programs this season.

Philharmonic to record 'La Boheme'

For the first time in its history, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra is about to record an opera.

Although IPO music director Zubin Mehta has many opera recordings to his credit and has also conducted the IPO in more than a few operatic productions, orchestra and maestro have not collaborated on an opera.

It will be recorded for Philips at the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv with the first sessions taking place at the end of January and the final ones at the end of June. The star-studded cast features Italian pop stars turned into opera heroes. Andrea Bocelli and Barbara Frittoli will sing the ill-fated lovers.

On February 25, Mehta and the IPO will perform a special concert at London's Buckingham Palace with clarinetist Sharon Kam as soloist. The concert, which is organized by the IPO Foundation and Arts for Nature, will be part of a two-day series of events at the palace which will be attended by members of the royal family.

Anthony Hopkins stays the oddball

Anthony Hopkins is a dark and stormy knight of Welsh acting. "I've always been turbulent," Hopkins says. "I've never been one of those peaceful characters."

Hopkins has portrayed many of what he calls "people who aren't very tightly wrapped." He has played Adolf Hitler, the Lindbergh baby kidnapper Bruno Hauptmann and the disturbed ventriloquist in the cult favorite, *Magic*. He's less proud of his work in fluffier films like *International Velvet* with Tatum O'Neal.

Hopkins was born on Dec. 31, 1937, in South Wales. "I was an oddball when I was a kid," he says. "I hated school. In the postwar period, we didn't have good teachers. Our education was hideous, a lot of corporal punishment. I was terrible in everything."

Hopkins' teachers told him he was a failure, and he took those feelings of inadequacy with him when he became an actor.

"I used to feel like a closed fist on the stage," he recalls. "I'd be angry at the audience and angry at the other actors. That anger has stayed with me all my life."

Although Hopkins was a poor student, he won a scholarship to the Welsh College of Music and Drama. He also attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

Hopkins made his stage debut in *Julius Caesar* in 1964. His first film was *The Lion in Winter* in 1968 with Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn.

Hopkins was an understudy to

Laurence Olivier in the London stage production of *Dance of Death* in 1966. When Olivier became ill, Hopkins stepped into the role. Olivier said Hopkins "walked away with the part like a cat with a mouse between its teeth."

In *Howards End* and *The Remains of the Day*, Hopkins perfected a polite holding back of emotion, made up of syncopated pauses and gentlemanly mutterings.

But he is best-known for his chilling performance as Hannibal Lecter, a psychopathic psychiatrist who devours his patients, in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*. Hopkins played the evil Dr. Lecter opposite Jodie Foster, a fledgling FBI agent who must enlist his help in tracking down a serial killer.

Lecter was behind bars for most of the movie, but he managed to terrify Foster (and the film's audiences) with his eerie, chilling portrayal of a soft-spoken madman.

"It was easy to get into the character," Hopkins recalls. "I saw the external of the man, I saw he would be economical in his movements. And I saw he would have no sense of uncertainty, which of course is a true symptom of madness."

He won an Oscar for the role.

Hopkins was nominated again as an English gentleman in *The Remains of the Day*, in the title role in *Nixon*, and as the benign but cantankerous John Quincy Adams in *Amistad*. His most recent films include *The Mask of Zorro* and *Meet Joe Black*. (AP)

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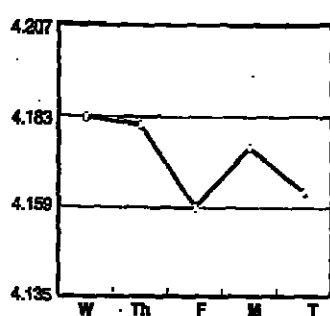
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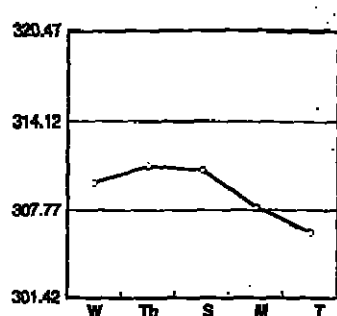
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in brief

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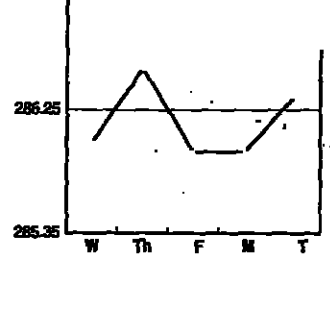


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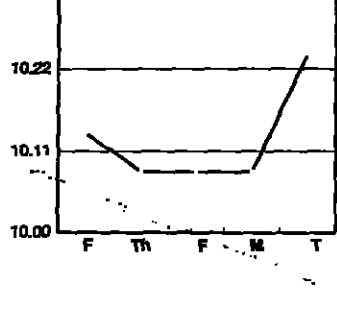
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Ministries to
synchronize road-rail
planning activity

By JESSICA STEINBERG

In an effort to solve worsening traffic jams, the National Infrastructure and Transport Ministries are joining forces on a master plan for building highways and railroads over the next decade, according to National Infrastructure Director General Yaakov Katz.

"The goal is to find an economic and timely strategy for transportation infrastructure, with one staff of experts and one final decision," Katz said.

Until now, the Transport Ministry handled inter-city transportation while Infrastructure dealt with intra-city traffic, he said. The new plan calls for a joint staff headed by both ministries, as well as representatives from the Treasury and Interior Ministry.

A master plan is all well and good, said Hebrew University economist and public utilities expert Reuven Gronau, but there's still a major division of responsibility among the relevant authorities.

"There's the road authority, the train authority, the light rail people," Gronau said. "There's grandiose plans in each city and there's no prioritizing."

The priorities are quite simple, according to the grassroots

Committee for Public Transportation. Stop building roads and start laying tracks.

"Mayor Olmert could have rebuilt the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv line for the same money he used on the Begin artery," said committee representative Henry Gold.

Like many "green" organizations, Gold's group is pushing for a mass transit solution that is more economically, socially and environmentally viable.

"Cars cost about NIS 2,000 a month to run and most people earn NIS 5,000 to NIS 7,000 a month," said Gold, an engineer who doesn't own a car. "The solution is an integrated system where you get off the train and pick up a bus."

In 1997, the government spent NIS 3.5 billion on new roads across the country, including the NIS 900 million spent on the Begin Highway, according to Central Bureau of Statistics figures. In 1999, NIS 600 million is planned for mass transit, 16 percent of total transportation infrastructure spending.

"If the government took half of that NIS 3.5 billion and spent it on light rail, then we wouldn't have to worry about priority lists," Gold said. "The issue is that in relative terms, we're spending the minimum on mass transit," he said.

Egypt, Israel to launch gas talks

By DAVID ZEY HARRIS

Egypt and Israel will begin commercial talks for the supply of Egyptian natural gas early next month, the National Infrastructure Ministry announced yesterday.

Israel is in the process of selecting its energy supply for well into the next century, with piped natural gas the firm favorite. But until last week, there were no formal talks with Egypt, the obvious potential supplier.

National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon had refused to respond to overtures from multinational companies operating out of Egypt until he had received a formal letter from

the Egyptian authorities expressing interest in supplying natural gas. Late last week Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) Chairman Abdel Khalek Ayyad wrote to Sharon expressing interest in supplying gas, allowing Sharon to confirm yesterday that this allows "a serious look at the possibility of a credible, continuous supply of gas to Israel under any circumstances and on an economic and commercial basis alone."

By purchasing natural gas from Egypt, Israel will save an annual \$150 million over any viable alternative, according to industry expert Amit Mor.

His figures suggest \$100m. will be saved directly, while social and

environmental costs will be reduced by at least \$50m. in comparison with other fossil fuels.

Sources in the multinationals expressed surprise that Israel had decided to publicize the news at such an early stage, especially given the commercial and political sensitivity in relations between the states. "We're all pleased by this development but want to continue with this quietly," said one company representative.

Israel is currently in talks with other companies and countries for the supply of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). However there are huge costs involved in establishing the LNG liquefaction and regasification

plants required to safely transport the gas by container ships.

The only choice has to be Egypt," said an Israeli industry source. This view is one shared by the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC), which is leading negotiations and will be the main consumer of gas - which will fuel the turbines in its power generation plants.

The venue for talks has yet to be finalized, according to National Infrastructure Ministry Director-General Yaakov Katz. The negotiations will be led by IEC and the multinationals led by Amoco and ENI, with both Sharon's ministry and EGPC having considerable sway. The talks, said Sharon, will

focus on the timetable, quantities required and price.

It is not yet clear whether gas would be supplied via a sub-marine pipeline or one constructed through the Sinai towards the border at Eilat. The former would possibly allow for future supply to Lebanon and Turkey, while the latter could also benefit the Palestinian areas and Jordan.

Once there is an agreement, delivery will take some 2-2.5 years. Israel is expected to ensure a secondary power source supplier, in case relations with Egypt deteriorate. Industry sources say the country is unlikely to plump for LNG but rather coal or heavy oil.

Liberman
heirs seek
\$450m.
for Paz
share

By DAN GERSTENFELD

The heirs of Australian-Jewish investor Jack Liberman are asking for some \$450 million for their controlling interest in the Paz Oil Company, a source close to the negotiations said yesterday.

Bidders for the family's stake in Israel's largest petroleum company include businessmen Michael Dorsman and Hanan Ben-Yehuda, who confirmed yesterday that they are holding advanced negotiations with the Liberman family and Zedek Bino, who represents the family.

The source said that the Israel Corp. is also interested in the company and that at least one more group has entered negotiations.

There have been rumors that Claridge Israel, which is controlled by the Bronfman family and holds 30% of Paz, is interested in acquiring the holdings of Liberman through Koor Industries.

The Liberman family, together with Bino, holds 63 percent of the fuel company through Aura Investment. The remaining 7% are held by Paz CEO Mordechai Ben-Shach. In a statement, Dorsman and Ben-Yehuda said they would be interested in buying the company for an "appropriate price."

Dorsman - the son-in-law of shipping magnate Ted Arison, who last year purchased controlling stake in Bank Hapoalim - said the Arison group is not involved in the deal and that he intends to finance it from the resources of Public Investments, an investment company jointly held with Ben-Yehuda.

Sources close to Public Investments said that the company is interested in acquiring a 100% stake and is holding negotiations with all shareholders. Ben-Shach will be asked to remain in the company, he added.



LA auto show

This 1999 Lincoln Cartier is one of the latest US-made models to be exhibited at the Los Angeles Auto Show, which opens Saturday at the city's convention center and runs through January 10. (AP)

'Monetary council will strengthen governor's role'

By DAVID ZEY HARRIS

The Levin Committee's recommendation to introduce a monetary council was in no way intended to weaken the authority of Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel, nor the bank itself, committee member and Tel Aviv University economist Haim Ben-Shahar said yesterday.

Following Monday's publication of the committee's report, various media reports suggested the report was "a blow to the governor," adding that "his exclusive authority to fix interest rates will be withdrawn."

However, Ben-Shahar said the decision to recommend a council to make key monetary decisions, including setting interest rates, merely emulates similar frameworks already in existence in dozens of Western states.

"In our opinion this strengthens the governor," said Ben-Shahar, explaining the five-member council will add weight to decisions and will effectively bring to an end personal attacks against the governor. "The Bank of Israel itself also recommended a monetary council."

There is absolutely nothing to read between the lines that implies any form of dissatisfaction with

Frenkel nor any bid to weaken his position or that of the central bank, Ben-Shahar added.

The Levin Committee further recommended the governor no longer serve as economics adviser to the government. This, too, was a move supported by Frenkel, who on the one hand has to display the independence of a governor, yet at the same time must to offer his views on macro- and other economic issues of the day.

Senior Bank of Israel sources yesterday said the bank will be studying the two-volume report closely in upcoming days before it would discuss any specifics per-

taining to its content.

The Levin Committee was set up in part in the wake of an ongoing effort from various pressure groups interested in a relatively weak shekel. Those groups include the Manufacturers Association, the Chambers of Commerce, some senior Treasury officials, and to a lesser extent the Histadrut labor union.

Until recently Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu staunchly supported the bank in its struggle for a strong shekel, but in recent weeks he has backtracked, calling for a retreat from next year's 4-percent inflation target.

Euro pioneers ready to charge

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Surrounded by hype about the debut of Europe's single currency on Friday, some consumers may be disappointed to find they will have to wait until 2002 to actually use the new coins.

But those who are eager to be pioneers in Europe's brave new monetary world will be able to experiment with a variety of transactions in euros once they recover from their New Year celebrations.

Those transactions include bank accounts, bank transfers, mortgages, credit card payments, traveler's cheques, personal checks - just about anything, that is, that doesn't involve cash.

Belgian banks, often in the vanguard in banking matters, have even announced that consumers can get the Proton prepaid electronic payment card - used generally for inexpensive purchases such as phone calls - in euros in 1999.

The number of merchants who will accept euro payments is likely to be small at first, with the percentage growing as consumers become more comfortable with the new currency.

Jim Murray, director of the European Consumers' Organization (BEUC) in Brussels, is one of the adventurous ones. He said he has already asked his bank to open a euro account for him, joking that he wanted to be a "leader of fashion."

"I wanted to start the process, to get into it early," he said.

However, he said others should not feel pressured to follow suit. "Because there's a transition period, it's something people can be relaxed about, at least at the beginning."

The EU has decided to introduce the single currency in stages to avoid an abrupt switchover. Eleven countries - Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain - will launch the euro on New Year's Day.

But they will not ditch their own currencies until mid-2002.

Euro notes and coins will be

issued from January 1 of that year. "During the transition period, euro zone residents will find a growing number of chances to try out the new currency."

For example, Bass Hotels & Resorts, saying it was "ahead of the game," announced in September, it would allow guests at more than 300 Inter-Continental, Crowne Plaza, and Holiday Inn hotels to pay in euros from January 1.

It said they could make credit card or other electronic payments or use "eurochecks," the system that already allows Europeans to write cheques in multiple currencies.

Ian Graham, leader of Bass's euro steering committee, said the move responds partly to demand from corporate customers - such as the German electronics giant Siemens - which have announced they would prefer to be billed in euros in the next fiscal year.

"We can steal a march on a competitor that hasn't prepared as fully," he said.

Experts say it is difficult to predict how many companies will follow Bass's example. But Hasan Alemdar, director of Visa International's single currency unit, said the numbers are likely to be higher initially in areas that are major travel destinations, and in countries such as France and Spain where the banking infrastructure is centralized.

Based on a quick survey of banks in July, Europay International estimates that about 10 percent of merchants will begin accepting euro payments in 1999, with an additional 40 percent signing on in 2000, said Dominique Bichut, the company's euro program coordinator.

Europay operates the Eurocard-MasterCard, Maestro, Cirrus and eurocheck payment systems, all of which will offer the euro option from January 1.

The consumers who are most likely to dip into the new currency are those who do a lot of traveling, experts say.

"When they get their statement,

EURO LAUNCH

By SUZANNE PEREIRA

they can see what they paid in one currency instead of 11 different currencies," Alemdar said.

Visa, the Thomas Cook Group, and American Express are among companies that will be offering traveler's cheques denominated in euros from January 1.

Officials said the option should appeal to individuals who are traveling to several euro zone countries and want to carry only one set of checks.

Customers from outside the euro zone - say from Britain or the United States - might also prefer euros to sterling or dollars, because they will not have to worry about exchange rate fluctuations, they said.

During the transition period, the exchange rates between the 11 participating currencies - and between them and the euro - will be fixed. That will make it easier for travelers to know exactly how much they are spending and to avoid getting ripped off when they change their money.

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new currency will get some guidance from logos declaring "We accept payment in euros" in one of eight languages - an initiative of the European Commission, the EU's executive body. Shopkeepers who display the logo have agreed to abide by six principles for dual pricing.

For example, they will not charge a fee if a consumer decides to pay in euros and will follow rules for rounding out conversions into euros.

Ceu Pereira, economic adviser in charge of the euro for the retail federation EuroCommerce, said use of the logo will vary.

German retail and consumer associations, for example, have decided to follow the principles but forgo the logo, she said.

Pereira said she expects to be one of the slow ones. "I must confess that at the beginning I maybe won't even look at [euro prices]," she said. "I'm probably going to

wait until 2001."

Until 2002, euro zone residents will be able to do their banking in either euros or their national currencies. Major European banking groups have agreed to follow a code of good practice during that time, pledging not to charge customers for switching accounts from national currencies to euros or to convert payments from one currency to the other.

They also agreed not to charge special fees for services denominated in euros. Because the exchange rate risk will disappear, banks will no longer charge commissions for converting one euro zone currency to another, though they may charge handling fees.

But banking officials said consumers should not necessarily switch over until it makes sense - for example when they start getting paid in euros.

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Commission begins investigation into Salt Lake Games

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — A commission chaired by former US Senate majority leader George Mitchell formally opened a two-month investigation yesterday into allegations of corruption surrounding the decision to stage the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

The five-member commission appointed by the United States Olympic Committee is one of four bodies investigating charges that local organizers offered gifts and services, including scholarships and free medical treatment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, to win the games for Salt Lake City.

Promising a "prompt and thorough" investigation, Mitchell said his goal was to uncover any improper practices that may have taken place and ensure they did not happen again in the future.

"If there were practices that were inappropriate, we will do everything we can to avoid them in the future,"

said Mitchell, who helped negotiate a peace agreement in Northern Ireland earlier this year and is also informally advising President Bill Clinton on how to handle impeachment proceedings against him in the Senate.

Other members of the commission include baseball players association general counsel Donald Fehr and former White House chief of staff Kenneth Duberstein, who served during the Reagan administration.

Mitchell acknowledged that the commission had no power to compel witnesses to testify and was completely dependent on the willingness of key players to cooperate.

The allegations of corruption have tarnished the Salt Lake City Games but do not appear to threaten their existence. Both the International Olympic Committee and the US Olympic Committee have said they fully expect the games to go ahead as scheduled.

Israel youth crush Hungary 6-1

By ORI LEWIS

Israel's national under-17 soccer team got off to a very positive start in the annual International Youth tournament yesterday.

The boys notched a 6-1 win over Hungary in their match in Lod. Ironi Ashdod's Baruch Dago and Maccabi Haifa's Yaniv Kattan scored two goals apiece.

Shai Dahan and Ran Kozak each added one goal, while the Hungarians scored a consolation effort through Stefan Kovacs.

This was the first-ever international fixture for the current squad who are the backup side

for the under-18s. They will slip into the "A-team" role when the current under-18 players reach their 19th birthday.

In other matches in the youth tournament, European champions Ireland beat Belgium 3-1 and Yugoslavia held off Turkey 2-1.

Israel's under-16 side managed only a goalless draw against Switzerland despite having the upper hand and hitting the post twice in the match in Bat Yam. The other under-16 match ended Sweden 2, Cyprus 0.

Play in the tournament continues today and runs through to Sunday.

Stewart and Co. answer their critics

HOW to prove the press wrong — get a good result, and that is exactly what England's cricketers achieved against all the odds in Melbourne yesterday.

It's lucky the tourists haven't been able to read the abuse hurled at them — after last week's humiliation against the Australia A team the guillotine was poised over the head of coach David Lloyd.

Such was the press's certainty that Lloyd was going, that there were a number of features suggesting that former England all-rounder Bob Woolmer, now the coach of South Africa, was being lined up. You may be sure that Lloyd, a polished speaker on the after-dinner circuit, will be getting some revenge over the next few days.

Alec Stewart has yet to lose a series as captain and his team will be well fired up for the final Test at Sydney next week. Victory in Melbourne was achieved without a spinner but there will be enforced changes for Sydney, a wicket which is known to take spin.

WHILE the England players were sunning it, the traditional Christmas football program generated plenty of heat to offset the dreadful weather. On Saturday, Aston Villa goalkeeper Michael Oakes was given a red card by referee Mike Reed for handling the ball outside the area. Unfortunately for Villa, and Reed, video replays clearly showed Oakes handling the ball inside the area — the keeper's momentum taking him out of the box by which time he dropped the ball.

Then on Monday's second half of the holiday extravaganza, no less than four foreign

Premiership players were sent off for various nasties. Patrick Vieira went for the fourth time in his Arsenal career making it 18 reds for the club since Arsene Wenger took over. Derby's Costa Rican striker Paolo Wanchope was ordered off after getting involved in another kind of striking with Middlesbrough's Andy Townsend. Newcastle's Dietmar Hamann and Sheffield Wednesday's Dejan Stefanovic were the other naughty boys.

However much of a traditionalist you are, there is something wrong with the holiday programs at Christmas and Easter. It's certainly good for the hundreds of Israelis who combine two games with the Oxford Street sales and a performance of *Phantom of the Opera*, but as Blackburn manager Brian Kidd pointed out over the weekend: "They laugh at us abroad. On the continent they are having a rest just now while we're knocking our backsides off with two games in 48 hours."

On the field the main excitement came once again at the Liverpool-Newcastle game, a fixture which has an uncanny knack of producing 4-3 thrillers. That it was only 4-2 this time was down to a brilliant late save by Liverpool keeper David James from George Gerdasidis — all this after an amazing second-half comeback in which Liverpool scored four goals in 23 minutes. Once again Michael Owen was on target with two goals. Owen was featured all over the tabloids over the weekend, on the

wrong page but for the right reason. The clean-living youngster was devastated to discover that the Liverpool players' Christmas party (yes we're on that well-trodden path again) was nothing more than drunken orgy. It's certainly a fascinating anthropologist — why do English footballers feel the need to consume vast amounts of lager and behave in an obscene manner?

As for Newcastle, things are going from bad to worse for manager Rudi Gullit as his team lie just eight points away from the relegation zone. Last week Gullit felt the full throttle of criticism from Newcastle fans after spending the festive season with his girlfriend and baby in Amsterdam — only returning to Newcastle on Boxing Day to see his team lose to Leeds.

Gullit was adamant he had done nothing wrong claiming that he spent much more time than other coaches in training and with the team but if Newcastle slip up against Crystal Palace in the FA Cup third round on Saturday, fans will want him to go much further than Amsterdam. The tie of the round in terms of romance features top of the league against bottom with Premiership leaders Aston Villa entertaining Hull City adrift by six points at the bottom of the Third Division.

Another team in trouble is Nottingham Forest whose 1-1 home draw with Southampton leaves the Midlands club rooted

to the bottom of the Premiership. Fans demonstrated after the game demanding money be made available to buy players. It seems certain that troubled striker Pierre van Hooijdonk and England midfielder Steve Stone will be sold to raise cash.

AS the shops do a roaring trade in the sales, spare a thought for the poor England fans who are going to have to fork out a sizable sum when the new England kit is launched in April. Thousands of replica kits bought as Christmas presents will be invalidated by the new kit which will set fans back about £80 for the set. "It's exploiting fans' loyalty to an obscene degree," complained Michael Blatt from the Football Supporters Association in a newspaper report.

The new kit will resemble England strips from the late fifties and early sixties with a round collar — the Football Association's marketing people have really put that collar around fans' necks.

LAST but not least — and straight to the point — we come to darts and the Skol World Championship being held in Purfleet. Five-time world champion Eric Bristow aka The Crafty Cockney crashed out in the first round to Peter Manley but the player most on heat with the arrows was Steve Peggum whose rousers caught fire from the TV stage lighting.

True to the stoicism which makes darts such compulsive viewing Peggum carried on: "We have to concentrate hard and my leg being on fire made it a bit harder," he said. Presumably, the fire was put out at the double.

Sabonis returns to Lithuania

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Center Arvydas Sabonis yesterday joined Lithuania's national champions Zalgiris Vilnius and will play for them during the NBA lockout.

Sabonis, who played for the Portland Trail Blazers last season, signed a five-month contract, but both sides said he could return to the NBA if the lockout is ended.

His first game is scheduled against Red Star Belgrade next week.

On Monday, free agent center Vlade Divac signed with Yugoslav champions Red Star Belgrade in a deal with similar provisions.

Tiberias Marathon to run next week

By HEATHER CHAIT

Last year a pulled muscle left Ethiopian runner Abebe Mekonen in second place but he's back and looking for a win in this year's Tiberias Marathon.

Mekonen's best time is 2:07:35 (the world record is 2:06:52) and although he is not in peak condition, his presence certainly adds a splash of color to the already attractive event.

The 22nd marathon will run on January 6 along the scenic route from Tiberias to Ein Giv and back. Nearly 300 runners have

already registered, including 50 from overseas countries including Canada, Germany, Japan and Finland. Seeking to topple Mekonen will be his countrymen Dube Jilo (2:11:05) and Negere Tene. Zimbabwe's Mafai Cephas (2:13:48) is another name to watch.

Last year's winner who set the new course record of 2:12:51 after 20 years, Moses Taya, also from Ethiopia, will not be competing due to injury. For local runners, the marathon, the only 42.195 kilometer run in Israel, is also the Israeli championships but national

champion Zviada Wodag has jolted the organizers by threatening to withdraw from the race. Wodag is protesting against his club Elitzur who, he claims, have not paid his allowance for seven months. The marathon was seen as an excellent chance for Wodag to crack the 2:16 limit to qualify for Sydney 2000. In his absence, Assaf Bimro and Igor Bereslovsky will be the favorites among the Israeli runners.

Seven local women, including three-times winner Nili Abramski, will be competing but no woman runner from abroad has signed up.

Abramski's much publicized dispute over the inequality of the prize money for men and women has come to naught as the first male winner will take home \$15,000, with a \$5,000 bonus for a new record while the female winner will pocket \$15,000 only.

The first Israeli male will receive \$15,000. Registration for the marathon is \$150 for Israelis and \$45 for foreigners. The main sponsors are Radisson Moriah Plaza, Neviot, Nike and the Redman Center.

For more information and to register, call 06-6790896.

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Vikings, Broncos look super

NEW YORK (AP) — If the Minnesota Vikings win the Super Bowl, they may look back to November 1 as the most important day of the season.

That's when they lost for the only time this season — 27-24 in Tampa. The loss allowed them to concentrate on the rest of the season.

Without the pressure of trying to go unbeaten, the Denver Broncos carried such a burden in starting 13-0.

So make the Vikings the favorite to win the Super Bowl as they enter the playoffs relaxed and relatively healthy. And make the Jets a decent bet to upset the Broncos for the American Football Conference title because Bill Parcells has his team peaking perfectly for the postseason.

Forget the big-name teams — the 49ers, Packers and Cowboys, all Super Bowl winners this decade. At best, they have an outside chance to reach the conference title game, but little chance of winning in Minnesota. "I was hoping for a little more momentum," Green Bay coach Mike Holmgren said after the Packers stumbled to a 16-13 win against Chicago on Sunday. "We didn't function as well as I'd have liked. We were a little sloppy, but we won and that's what I was hoping for."

A look at the playoffs by conference.

American Football Conference

Denver (14-2) remains the favorite.

The Broncos will be home, where they've won 24 straight regular-season games. They also got some of their momentum back by beating the Seahawks 28-21 on Sunday.

But it could get a little scary for Denver if the Jets come to Mile High for the AFC title game. Parcells has been to three Super Bowls and he's had all three of those teams (the 1986 and '90 Giants and the '96 Patriots) playing their best at season's end, just the way his team is playing now.

"Damn! What kind of coach is he, really?" asked Keyshawn Johnson after the Jets beat the Patriots 31-10 Sunday, dominating them in a game that meant more to New England.

"You take a team from 1-15 to 12-4 to the postseason to the AFC East championship. It's crazy." (Actually, there was a midway point — 9-7 last season).

Johnson himself is an example, a high-profile, high-talent youngster who Parcells has transformed into a Pro Bowler from a "me-first" player who wrote an autobiography titled *Just Give Me the Damn Ball* after an uninspired rookie season.

But Denver remains the favorite to return to the Super Bowl.

The home field, John Elway

and Terrell Davis do that for the Broncos. And Mike Shanahan is in Parcells' class as a coach — he did a marvelous job avoiding the post-Super Bowl letdown that plagues most champions.

It would hard to go beyond the AFC's top two. Buffalo is probably the scariest because Doug Flutie has

demonstrated he can perform the same kind of miracles in the NFL as in Canada and at Boston College. On Saturday, they go to Miami, where the Dolphins will be without one of their key defensive players, Jason Taylor, who broke his collarbone in Atlanta on Sunday.

New England and Jacksonville, the other two AFC entries, will meet Sunday with either backup quarterbacks or damaged quarterbacks — Drew Bledsoe has a broken finger and Mark Brunell has a sprained ankle.

National Football Conference

Which opening game is more interesting, Green Bay at San Francisco or Arizona at Dallas? Probably the first, simply because the teams involved are in the dying dynasty category. The 49ers' front office is in turmoil and its defense is terrible; the Packers have a lot of injuries and Brett Favre is having an off-year.

But the second game has its charms — the Cardinals haven't won a playoff game in 51 years and have lost 16 of the last 17 games they've played with Dallas, including 38-10 and 35-28 this year.

Whichever team advances has little chance — Dallas was the first team ever to go 8-0 in the NFC East, but was 2-6 against the rest, and eventually the Cowboys will have to play outside their division.

Can San Francisco or Green Bay win in Atlanta or Minneapolis? Unlikely.

This is the first year a team with a dome has home-field advantage, and that can make a huge difference in big games.

Still, the Packers were reasonably competitive at Minnesota this year — they were done in by two early turnovers and couldn't catch up although they were in the game until the final minutes.

Can Atlanta win at Minnesota? Maybe.

The Falcons have demonstrated they can dominate the Rams, Panthers, Saints, Colts and other underdogs. Their impressive wins were 41-10 in New England and 31-19 over the 49ers at home.

But this will be the first playoff experience for most of them and winning in Minnesota may be too much.

Prediction? A month ago, it was easy — Vikings-Broncos.

Now? It would be nice to say Falcons-Jets. But stick with this: Vikings-Broncos. (AP)

NFL Final Standings

(Tied teams ordered on tiebreakers)

AMERICAN CONFERENCE							NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA	East	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
San Francisco	11	5	0	.688	392	338	San Francisco	11	5	0	.688	400	333
San Diego	10	6	0	.625	400	333	San Diego	10	6	0	.625	387	325
San Jose	9	7	0	.563	337	329	San Jose	9	7	0	.563	325	378
Indianapolis	3	13	0	.188	310	444	Indianapolis	3	13	0	.188	311	344
Central							Central						
San Francisco	11	5	0	.688	392	338	San Francisco	11	5	0	.688	400	333
Tennessee	8	8	0	.500	373	310	Tennessee	8	8	0	.500	314	295
Pittsburgh	7	9	0	.438	263	303	Pittsburgh	7	9	0	.438	308	378
Baltimore	6	10	0	.375	269	335	Baltimore	6	10	0	.375	308	378
Cincinnati	3	13	0	.188	268	452	Cincinnati	3	13	0	.188	268	452
West							West						
San Diego	14	2	0	.875	501	309	San Diego	14	2	0	.875	442	289
Oakland	8	8	0	.500	378	356	Oakland	8	8	0	.500	379	358
Seattle	8	8	0	.500	372	310	Seattle	8	8	0	.500	375	329
Kansas City	7	9	0	.438	327	363	Kansas City	7	9	0	.438	320	336
San Diego	5	11	0	.313	241	342	San Diego	5	11	0	.313	250	378

x-won division title, y-wild-card qualifier

NFL Playoffs

Wild Card	Divisional	Conference	National
Saturday, January 2	Saturday, January 2	Saturday, January 2	Saturday, January 2
San Francisco at Miami	San Francisco at Miami	San Francisco at Miami	San Francisco at Miami
Arizona at Dallas	Arizona at Dallas	Arizona at Dallas	Arizona at Dallas
Sunday, January 3	Sunday, January 3	Sunday, January 3	Sunday, January 3
New England at Jacksonville	New England at Jacksonville	New England at Jacksonville	New England at Jacksonville
Green Bay at San Francisco	Green Bay at San Francisco	Green Bay at San Francisco	Green Bay at San Francisco
Divisional Playoffs	Divisional Playoffs	Divisional Playoffs	Divisional Playoffs
Saturday, January 3	Saturday, January 3	Saturday, January 3	Saturday, January 3

College Bowl Games

Saturday, December 19									
Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13	Las Vegas Bowl: North Carolina 20, San Diego State 13
Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29	Motor City Bowl: Marshall 48, Louisville 29
Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25
Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24	Blue-Gray Classic: Gray 31, Blue 24
Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43	Alamo Bowl: Colorado 51, Oregon 43
Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25	Oahu Classic: Air Force 45, Washington 25
Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26	Saturday, December 26
Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2	Hortega Bowl: Southern U. 28, Bethune-Cookman 2
Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31	Insight.com Bowl: Missouri 34, West Virginia 31
Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night	Last Night
Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)	Music City Bowl: Alabama (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech (8-3)
Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)	Mid-American Bowl: North Carolina State (7-4) vs. Miami (8-3)
Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)	Alamo Bowl: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Purdue (8-4)
Today	Today	Today	Today	Today	Today	Today	Today	Today	Today
Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)	Humanitarian Bowl: Idaho (8-3) vs. Southern Miss (7-4)
Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)	Holiday Bowl: Nebraska (9-3) vs. Arizona (11-1)

Stern wants player vote, union says no

NEW YORK (AP) — The commissioner of the National Basketball Association wants the players to vote on his "final" offer to end a 6-month lockout by owners. But the union won't allow it.

That's where things stood Monday on Day 181 of the NBA lockout. And if nothing changes for another 10 days, David Stern says the entire basketball season will be canceled.

"We do not anticipate any further negotia-

tions between now and January 7," the commissioner said. "If the players have something to tell us, we'll take it back to our (labor) committee, but the likelihood is that the season will be canceled January 7."

Stern, in some of his strongest and most sarcastic remarks of the lockout, said the players' "runaway" negotiating committee will be to blame if there is no agreement by January 7. That's the date of a Board of Governors meeting at which Stern predict-

ed there will be an overwhelming majority of owners voting to cancel the entire season.

Union director Billy Hunter, still confident that a deal is possible, called for a resumption of talks between both sides' negotiating committees.

Allan Houston of the Knicks said the owners' moves were paltry. "To me, it's like putting garbage in the oven and putting sugar on it," he said.

Stern predicted the league will survive a canceled season if it comes to that.

"The NBA will open next year," he said. "It may not have the same players, it may not have the same ticket prices and it may not have the same television revenue. But it will be a league and it will survive for a long time, and it will continue to grow and recoup itself. It will have suffered tremendously, but it will live to entertain another day and ultimately thrive."

Hasek suffers 'off-night' as Devils win big



BUFFALO (AP) — Buffalo goalie Dominik Hasek had a rare bad game, and the New Jersey Devils made

the most of it with a 7-4 victory over the Sabres on Monday night.

Two nights after being shut out by the two-time Hart Trophy winner, the Devils scored on each of their first three shots and put four of six past Hasek.

Krzysztof Oliwa, Brendan Morrison, Petr Sykora and Dave Andreychuk scored to give the Devils a 4-1 lead and oust Hasek just 22 seconds into the second period. Hasek hadn't allowed three goals in the first period of a game since a 3-1 loss to the Devils on December 24, 1997.

Capitals 5, Bruins 1

Peter Bondra, Ken Klee and Sergei Gonchar scored first-period goals as Washington returned home from the longest road trip in team history and beat Boston.

The Capitals, who scored only 11 goals while going 2-6 on their three-week trip, notched three goals on 18 shots — the most they have taken during an opening period this season.

Blues 4, Red Wings 4

Vyacheslav Kozlov scored two goals that counted and two that didn't as Detroit snapped a five-game losing streak — their longest since January 1991 with a home tie.

Kozlov's second goal forged the tie with 9:13 remaining, bringing Detroit back from a 4-2 deficit in the second period.

He also had two apparent scores wiped out by video review, and took a penalty that negated a teammate's goal — all in the first period.

Mighty Ducks 2, Senators 2

Shawn McEachern's second goal of the game and team-leading 15th this season — with six seconds left in regulation — gave host



CALLBACK — Bruins' Steve Heinze (23) gets set to shoot the puck past Capitals goalie Rick Tabaracci in first-period action. The goal was disallowed due to Heinze being in the crease. (Reuters)

Ottawa a tie.

McEachern sent the game into overtime by burying a rebound past Anaheim goalie Dominic Roussel. McEachern also beat Roussel on the first shot of the game, but the Anaheim goalie then shut the door until the final seconds.

Panthers 5, Islanders 1

Defensemen Paul Laus and Terry Carkner scored rare goals as

host Florida won for the fourth time in the last five games.

Oleg Kvasha, Ray Whitney and Carkner all had a goal and an assist, while Viktor Kozlov added three assists to help Florida climb over .500 (13-12-6), for the first time since November 1997.

Stars 1, Predators 0

Shawn Chambers scored the only goal, and Ed Belfour made 14

saves as host Dallas remained unbeaten in 12 games to match a franchise record.

Belfour got his third shutout of the season and 43rd of his career as the Stars bettered their unbeaten run to 9-0-3. The Stars are in the midst of their longest unbeaten string since the Minnesota North Stars went 9-0-3 in 1982.

Kings 4, Coyotes 2

Luc Robitaille scored twice and added an assist as Los Angeles ended Phoenix's 11-game home unbeaten streak.

Jozef Stumpel also scored a pair of goals for the resurgent Kings (11-21-3), who have won three of their last four games.

Sharks 1, Flyers 1

Mike Vernon and John Vanbiesbroeck each stopped 22 shots as host San Jose, which Philadelphia skated to a tie.

Philadelphia extended its unbeaten streak to eight (4-0-4), while the Sharks were able to stretch their unbeaten string to five (4-0-1).

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New Jersey	20	9	4	44	101	84
Philadelphia	16	9	9	41	92	74
Pittsburgh	14	19	7	35	85	84
N.Y. Rangers	12	14	7	31	90	90
N.Y. Islanders	13	20	2	28	87	103

Northeast Division

Team	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Buffalo	19	7	5	43	91	58
Toronto	19	13	2	40	107	97
Boston	15	12	6	36	86	72
Ottawa	15	13	4	34	92	78
Montreal	9	18	7	25	73	96

Philadelphia 0-10-1

San Jose 0-10-1

First Period-None, Second Period-1, Los Angeles, Stumpel 3 (Rosa), 1:07, 2, Phoenix, Robitaille 17 (Alderson, Ferraro), 19:22, Third Period-None, Shots on goal-Los Angeles 4-12, Dallas 5-13-21, Goals-Philadelphia 4-12, Dallas, Belfour, A-16,928

Philadelphia 0-10-1

San Jose 0-10-1

First Period-None, Second Period-1, Los Angeles, Stumpel 3 (Rosa), 1:07, 2, Phoenix, Robitaille 17 (Alderson, Ferraro), 19:22, Third Period-None, Shots on goal-Los Angeles 4-12, Dallas 5-13-21, Goals-Philadelphia 4-12, Dallas, Belfour, A-16,928

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Hasek has off-night

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London Calling

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Joe Hoffman & Ori Lewis

Chelsea, United draw 0-0

LONDON (Reuters) - Chelsea wasted a plum chance to return to the top of the premier league yesterday, missing a handful of chances in a 0-0 draw with Manchester United, who went third.

Norwegian striker Tore Andre Flo was the main culprit as four good opportunities went wide in a first half dominated by the second-placed London club.

United looked more adventurous in the second half but Andy Cole failed to make much headway against Chelsea's French central defender Frank Leboeuf.

United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel kept United's hopes alive with a flailing save from Italian Gianfranco Zola 10 minutes from time to keep Chelsea behind leaders Aston Villa.

In the evening's other match, Wimbledon fought back twice to hold fifth-placed Leeds 2-2.

Radja, Bodiroga lead East to EuroStars win

BERLIN (AP) - Dino Radja and Dejan Bodiroga hit key baskets down the stretch yesterday as the East beat the West in the EuroStars, the European All-Star game.

Bodiroga poured in six straight points that wiped out a two-point West lead with 3:20 left as the East won 104-98.

Bodiroga, of Panathinaikos, scored 15 points for the East in a game played under NBA-like rules including a 24-second shot clock.

Radja led the East with 17.

Carlton Myers of TeamSystem Bologna was the game MVP after hitting for 20 points while Pedrag Damilovic added 19.

England beat Aussies by 12 runs

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - England breathed life into the Ashes series with an astonishing 12-run win over Australia in the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday.

Led by paceman Dean Headley, who took career-best figures of six for 60, England captured the last seven wickets for just 32 runs to dismiss the Australians for 162 in their second innings.

They had set the home side a modest total of 175 for victory.

"We always thought 175 was going to be competitive.

Australia in the past, as great a side as they are, have often struggled chasing totals like that," England captain Alec Stewart said.

"We went out there with our heads high, to show a bit of pride and try and win the game," England had already lost the Ashes when they went 2-0 down after the third Test.

"We said after Adelaide when we couldn't win the Ashes that we wanted to show Australia what we are capable of doing," Stewart said.

"We've won one game, there's still one to go and we're going to Sydney trying to square the series." The fifth and final Test begins on January 2 in Sydney.

Australian captain Mark Taylor said his team only had themselves to blame for the defeat. "We do tend to lose matches when the major prize is already won," he said.

"We got lazy, our top five batsmen all made between 18 and 43 when all we needed was for one of them to go on to make a 70."

Australia looked to be cruising towards victory at 130-3, only to collapse in a heap in the face of the bowling of Headley, who took match figures of eight for 176 on his Test



ENGLAND HERO - dean headley celebrates after taking one of his six wickets yesterday. (Reuters)

debut against Australia at Old Trafford last year.

He picked up the wickets of Mark Waugh (43), Darren Lehmann (41), Ian Healy (0) and Damien Fleming (0) within the space of 14 deliveries to reduce the home side to 140 for seven. He then added Matthew Nicholson (9).

Darren Gough, who took five for 96 in the first innings, polished off the tail when he dismissed Stuart MacGill and Glenn McGrath in three balls to give England an unforgettable win on one of the longest days in Test cricket history.

After a morning session of 2-1/2 hours to make up for time lost when the first day was rained off, the final session was a punishing three hours.

See ENGLAND, Page 18

England first innings 270	
Australia first innings 340	
England second innings (overnight 65-2)	
M.Ashcroft b Fleming	22
A.Stewart c Slater b MacGill	14
D.Headley b McGrath	14
N.Hussey c Slater b Nicholson	1
M.Rampersad b Nicholson	14
G.Hick b Fleming	9
W.Hogg c MacGill b Nicholson	60
D.Gough c Slater b MacGill	4
A.Fraser not out	7
A.Mullally c and b McGrath	16
Extras (5-4-2-0-11)	17
Total (55.2 overs)	244
Fall of wickets: 1-5 2-51 3-66 4-78 5-127 6-178 7-202 8-221 9-221 10-244	
Bowling: McGrath 20.2-6-55-2 (nb-1), Fleming 17-4-45-2 (nb-1), Nicholson 15-2-53-3, MacGill 27-3-81-3 (nb-4), M.Waugh 1-1-0-0	
Australia second innings	
M.Slater b Headley	18
M.Taylor c Headley b Headley	19
J.Langer c MacGill b Mullally	30
M.Waugh c Hick b Headley	39
S.McGill not out	39
D.Lehmann c Hogg b Headley	4
I.Healy c Hick b Headley	0
D.Fleming b Headley	0
M.Nicholson c Hogg b Headley	9
S.MacGill b Gough	0
G.McGrath b Headley	0
Extras (5-4-1-1-0-1)	9
Total (all out, 48.4 overs)	162
Fall of wickets: 1-31 2-41 3-102 4-130 5-140 6-140 7-140 8-161 9-162 10-162	
Bowling: Gough 15.4-2-54-2 (nb-1), Headley 17-6-80-6 (nb-3), Mullally 4-0-24-0, Fraser 4-0-25-0	
Result: England won by 12 runs. Australia leads series 2-1.	

South Africa take series after 9-wicket win over Windies

DURBAN (Reuters) - South Africa cruised to a nine-wicket victory in the third Test yesterday to take an unbeatable 3-0 lead over West Indies on their first post-apartheid tour of the republic.

The home side were set 146 for victory on the fourth day after dismissing West Indies for 259 in their second innings in the sixth over of the day.

opener Gary Kirsten, with 71 not out, guided the home side to victory as they reached 147 for one 45 minutes before tea.

South Africa won the first Test in Johannesburg by four wickets - their first Test win over West Indies

- and the second in Port Elizabeth by 178 runs, a win achieved within three days.

West Indies resumed their second innings on 246 for eight and quickly succumbed.

In the third over Ambrose was caught by Hansie Cronje at mid-on for five, which provided Shaun Pollock with his fifth wicket of the innings. He finished with five for 83.

Allan Donald finished with three for 62 after ending the innings by bowling Courtney Walsh for three. Ridley Jacobs was left undefeated on 15.

South Africa's victory surge was given the perfect start by Kirsten

and Herschelle Gibbs, who put together a 97-run stand for the first wicket.

The opening pair were virtually untroubled in taking South Africa to within 49 runs of victory.

However, two balls before lunch Gibbs swept a delivery from leg-spinner Rawl Lewis high into the air towards mid-wicket where Darren Ganga waited to take what was a simple catch.

But wicketkeeper Jacobs came sprinting from behind the stumps to claim the catch - and spilled it.

The opening partnership ended 25 minutes after lunch when Gibbs was trapped in front by off-spinner Carl

Hooper for 49.

Kirsten went on to score his 17th Test half-century, in 126 minutes, off 123 balls and with six fours.

Franklyn Rose, who took career best figures of 7-84 in the first innings, shared the new ball with Curtly Ambrose.

The teams now move on to Cape Town, where the fourth Test starts at Newlands on New Year's Day.

New Zealand-India

In Wellington, New Zealand and India headed for a cliffhanger finish in the second Test after two violent swings of fortune on the fourth day.

At the close, New Zealand were 73 for four and needed 140 runs to

win with a full day's play left.

But their chances were handicapped as Nathan Aslie, their batting middle order batsman, has a fracture in his left hand and will bat only in an emergency.

West Indies first innings 198 (B.Lara 51, J.Kallis 3-15, H.Cronje 3-15)

South Africa first innings 312 (J.Brundage 87, F.Foster 7-64)

West Indies second innings 259 (B.Lara 78, S.Pollock 5-83)

South Africa second innings

G.Kirsten not out 71

H.Gibbs b Hooper 48

J.Kallis not out 28

Extras (0-1-0-3) 4

Total (for one wicket) 247

Fall of wickets: 1-27

Bowling: Rose 9-0-51-0, Ambrose 4-0-16-0 (nb-3), Walsh 4-1-6-0, Hooper 19-4-50-1, Lewis 12-4-34-0

Result: South Africa won by nine wickets.

6 feared dead as Sydney-Hobart race ends

SYDNEY (Reuters) - A huge search for sailors swept overboard during the Sydney-Hobart yacht race was called off yesterday, leaving the final death toll from the ocean classic at six.

Officials from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority said the rescue operation had been suspended with two sailors still officially listed as missing and four confirmed as dead.

But they conceded there was next to no hope that the two missing, including British Olympic racer Glyn Charles, were alive.

"It's tragic but most people would realize that we do have to be realistic," said AMSA spokesman Brian Hill.

Massive search operation Australia's largest civilian maritime rescue was mounted on Sunday when savage weather hit the 115-strong Sydney-Hobart fleet off south-eastern Australia and turned the blue water classic into a desperate race for survival for many crews.

At its height 38 military and civilian aircraft were combing an area of 4,000 square nautical miles with navy boats and fishing trawlers below.

Only 40 of 115 boats remained in the race yesterday.

Rescue officials winched two bodies from the Tasman sea, both of crewmen from the veteran cutter *Winston Churchill* which was abandoned in the freak winds.

Six other crew from the cutter were rescued alive on Monday but the last one has yet to be found.

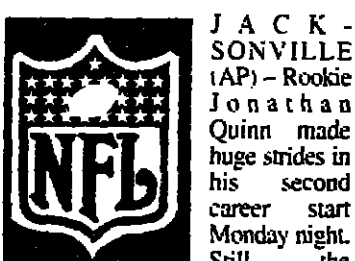
The deaths dulled what should have been a champagne end to the 54th annual race as US computer executive Larry Ellison skipped his maxi *Sayonara* into Hobart dock several hours ahead of defending champion *Brindabella*.

At either four or six, the death toll was by far the worst for the 630 nautical mile race, known as "Hell on Highwater" for the treacherous conditions off Australia's southeastern corner.

Only two sailors had perished since the blue water classic started in 1945. The toll was also the worst in an ocean race since 17 people died in a storm during the 1979 Fastnet event in Britain.

Steelers sputter in season finale

Jaguars win 21-3 to avoid three-game skid entering postseason



Jaguars would love to see him return to the bench next week.

Starting for the second straight game in place of the injured Mark Brunell, Quinn threw for a touchdown and ran for one as the Jaguars defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers 21-3.

Final standings, Playoff preview, Page 18

With the Steelers (7-9) already eliminated from the playoffs and the Jaguars (11-5) having secured the AFC Central title, this was billed as a meaningless game to close the 1998 season.

The Jaguars had other thoughts, knowing a loss would have made them only the third division winner in NFL history - joining the 1969 Rams and 1943 Redskins - to enter the post-season on a three-game losing streak.

"It was very, very important for us to win tonight," said coach Tom Coughlin. "We talked all week about



GROUNDNUT - Steelers QB Kordell Stewart is sacked by Jaguars' Kelvin Pritchett on an attempted pass play in first-quarter action. (Reuters)

the confidence and momentum that would feed from a win. If you studied the faces of the teams that won and lost (Sunday), you could see the difference."

Quinn's 10-for-19, 192-yard performance helped the Jaguars hit the playoffs on a high note.

Next, however, they wait and hope the ankle Brunell sprained four weeks ago is better by Sunday's

playoff game against the New England Patriots.

The Jaguars kept Pittsburgh out of the end zone, but their 20th-ranked run defense still allowed 139 yards to Jerome Bettis, who will have surgery today to clean out his ailing left knee.

The knee couldn't prevent Bettis from totaling 104 yards by halftime and surpassing the century mark for

the eighth straight time on Monday night, extending his own record.

Still, the Steelers were not able to avoid their first sub-.500 record since they finished 7-9 in 1991, which was also the last time they failed to win the AFC Central Division.

Pittsburgh Jacksonville 0-3-0-3

Second Quarter: PG-Johnson 24, 13:10.

Joe-Quinn 13 run (Holtz kick), 8:22. Joe-Taylor 9

pass from Quinn (Holtz kick), 3:24. Third Quarter:

Joe-Taylor 12 run (Holtz kick), 11:28. 4-24, 1:43.

Seahawks' Erickson joins sacked coaches

NEW YORK (AP) - In what may be the biggest one-day purge in NFL history, five coaches were fired Monday less than 24 hours after their seasons ended.

One-sixth of the league's coaches were dismissed: Ray Rhodes of Philadelphia, Dom Capers of Carolina, Ted Marchibroda of Baltimore, Dave Wannstedt of Chicago and Dennis Erickson of Seattle.

With the exception of Erickson, who was three time zones away, word of four of the firings came within an hour.

"I think it's disgusting. Some of the better coaches in the NFL got fired today," said Miami's Jimmy Johnson, a close friend of Wannstedt, who was his

defensive coordinator in Dallas.

"I know we're highly paid, but it's a shame when coaches' jobs are dependent on injuries, skyboxes, people in the stands and officiating calls. ... It doesn't give me a good feeling about our profession when I see things like I saw this morning."

There already are seven vacancies: Monday's five, plus the expansion Cleveland Browns and San Diego, where June Jones, who replaced Kevin Gilbride in midseason, has chosen to take the job at the University of Hawaii rather than take a shot at the permanent job with the Chargers.

There will be more. Norv Turner in Washington is on shaky ground and Cincinnati's Bruce Coslet may be as well.

Executive First - your office in the sky.

THE WEATHER

ISRAEL

All maps, forecasts and data provided by AccuWeather, Inc. © 1998

EUROPE WEATHER TODAY

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

ISRAEL CITIES

City	Today	High	Low	W	Thurs	High	Low	W	Fri	High	Low	W	Sat	High	Low	W
Ariel	13/5	13/5	6/4	13/5	13/5	13/5	6/4	13/5	13/5	13/5	6/4	13/5	13/5	13/5	6/4	13/5
Beersheva	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10
Dead Sea	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6
Eilat	21/7	21/7	11/2	21/7	21/7	21/7	11/2	21/7	21/7	21/7	11/2	21/7	21/7	21/7	11/2	21/7
Haifa	17/13	17/13	13/5	17/13	17/13	17/13	13/5	17/13	17/13	17/13	13/5	17/13	17/13	17/13	13/5	17/13
Jerusalem	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6	15/6	15/6	11/2	15/6
Netanya	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10
Tel Aviv	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10	16/10	16/10	12/5	16/10
Yotvata	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10	18/10	18/10	12/5	18/10

ISRAEL: Varying amounts of clouds and sun today; maybe a shower in the north. High 12-22. Partly to mostly cloudy tonight. Lows 4-14.

Full Moon Jan 2, New Moon Jan 17, First Quarter Jan 24

NORTH AMERICA WEATHER TODAY

City	Today	High	Low	W	Thurs	High	Low	W	Fri	High	Low	W	Sat	High	Low	W
Anchorage	23/22	23/22	13/12	23/22	23/22	23/22	13/12	23/22	23/22	23/22	13/12	23/22	23/22	23/22	13/12	23/22
Albuquerque	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Atlanta	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Boston	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Buffalo	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Calgary	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Chicago	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Cincinnati	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29
Cleveland	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29	21/10	41/29	41/29	41/29		